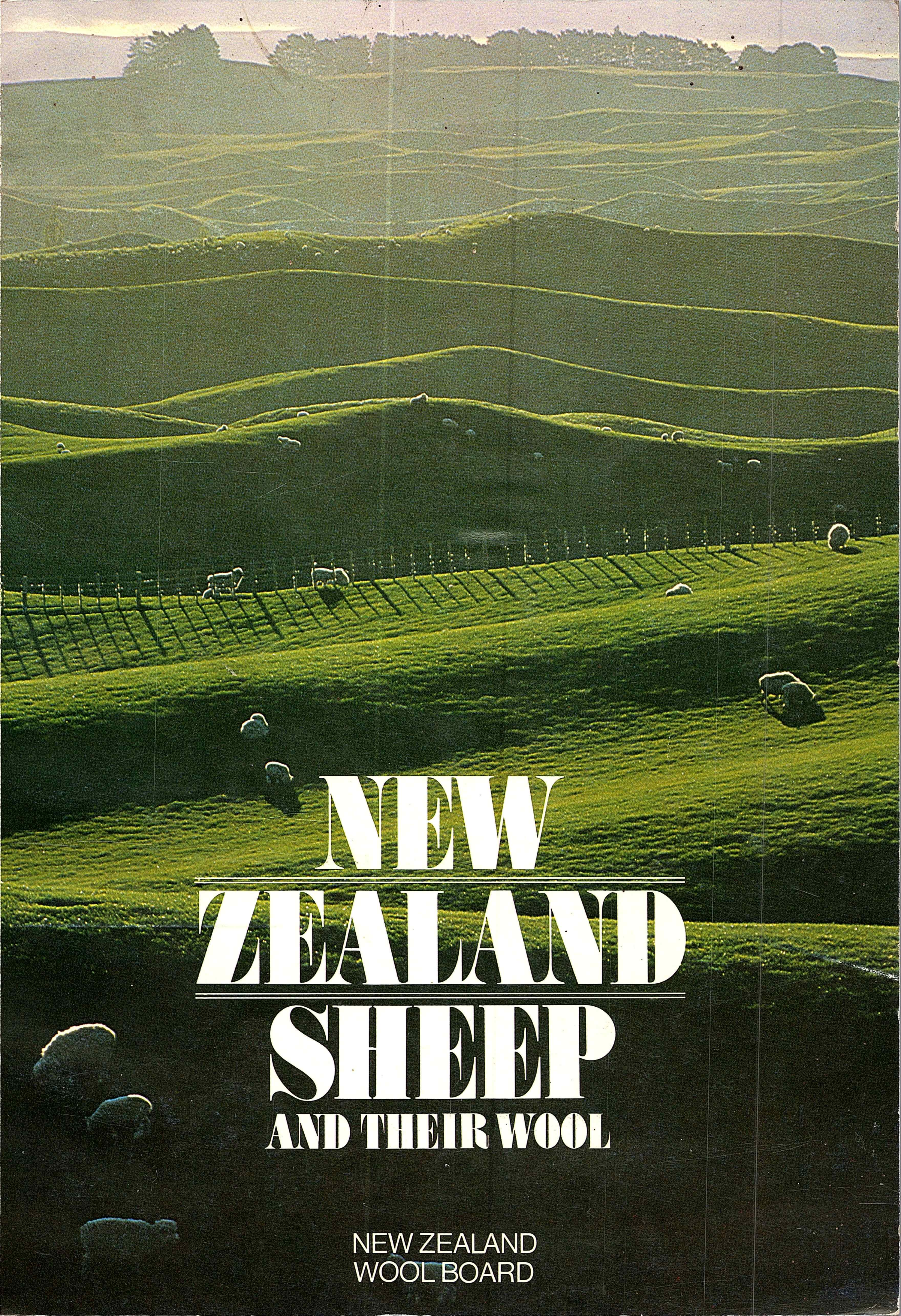

NEW ZEALAND SHEEP
AND THEIR WOOL

NEW ZEALAND
WOOL BOARD

Cover picture: Onga Onga, Hawke's Bay (National Publicity Studios)

Esmé Richards
1984

NEW ZEALAND SHEEP
AND THEIR WOOL

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Pure New Wool

AN INTRODUCTION

New Zealand's sheep industry is a story of "adapt and survive" . . . an evolution of farming patterns subject to the dictates of climate, terrain and world demand for quality products.

Today there are 65 million sheep; they outnumber people 20 to 1 and provide a third of the country's annual overseas income. For well over 100 years the national economy has been closely structured to the fluctuating prices meat and wool fetch on world markets. New Zealand is the largest supplier of coarse wool to world markets and it is the third largest wool-growing nation behind Australia and the Soviet Union.

Since the early days man and stock together have transformed a rugged natural environment into a highly productive agricultural country. It has been an on-going exercise and the result is an industry which is unrivalled anywhere in the world.

Distinct breeds of sheep have developed . . . dual-purpose animals which provide high-yielding, good colour wool and succulent roasting joints. They have established New Zealand's hallmark of quality and an enviable reputation which symbolises the nation's primary industry.

The men who control the sheep industry have helped mould a distinctive way of life. The pattern was set by pioneers who laid the foundation stone for the path New Zealand was to follow.

To make the decision to leave their homeland the early settlers were infused with a spirit of adventure. But to survive in an untamed and unknown land required courage, fortitude and a mountain of hard work.

The pioneers found a country of contrasts — flat fertile valleys, but with a predominance of steep hills and, in the backdrop, precipitous mountains and alpine ranges. Most of the land was covered in thick, almost inpenetrable rain forests with some pockets of native grasses and tussock. They found a country surrounded by sea and exposed to the whims of climate whipped up from the oceans. In the north it was sub-tropical and in the south it was more temperate.

They also found that after clearing native forest, the soils grew lush pasture and that with the well-spread rain grass grew for most of the year.

Thousands upon thousands of hectares of forest land was cleared, brought into pasture, fenced and stocked. In this environment the sheep was the pivot between forest regeneration and grass.

The first sheep farming ventures were trial and error. With the wide variations in New Zealand's climate, soil type and topography it soon became apparent that while some breeds might thrive in one area, others would not.

Specialist sheep were bred to suit the environment — easy-care animals, never housed in winter and requiring a minimum of shepherding.

Today, on over 30,000 farms, sheep range from sea level to rocky mountainous terrain 2000 metres and higher in the Southern Alps. In many lowland districts sheep have given way to dairying or horticulture but they still reign supreme in the hills.

Characterising the New Zealand pastoral scene is the one-man, one-farm concept where the family unit is the heart of the operation. On properties they own, husband wife and children work side-by-side as partners. They have developed as individualists, determining their own land-use and evolving highly efficient farming units.

Typically one farmer runs 1500 ewes, their replacements and some cattle. The stock graze grass pastures all year round and rarely require supplementary feed. The production figures are high — a national average of 5.5 kilograms of wool per head of sheep and nearly 100 per cent lambing.

The New Zealand farmer's ingenuity and willingness to experiment with new ideas, new products and new processes have continued to keep the industry progressing. The tractor, the bulldozer and the landrover are all essential tools for the larger-scale farming operation. Aerial topdressing, pioneered in New Zealand, enables farmers to fertilise steep and inaccessible hill country.

The start of the New Zealand sheep industry reaches back to the earliest colonial days. Navigator and explorer Captain James Cook saw potential for a pastoral industry. On his second voyage from England to New Zealand in 1773 he landed two Merinos in the Marlborough Sounds — survivors of a flock brought from the Cape of Good Hope. But these animals died within a few days of being put ashore.

Missionary, pastoralist and stock breeder, the Rev Samuel Marsden introduced sheep in 1814 to the Bay of Islands in North Auckland. Although there is no record of their permanent survival, there are reports of New Zealand wool selling in Sydney around that time.

The first permanent flock is credited to James Bell Wright, who landed Merinos on Mana Island near Wellington in 1834. During the next decade importations rose rapidly and by the mid-1840s sheep were firmly established in the Wairarapa, Marlborough, Canterbury and Otago regions.

The Merino was New Zealand's dominant breed until the late 19th century, but its influence began to wane after refrigerated shipping was introduced in 1882. The Merino was a slow-maturing wool specialist. Also counting against it was its inability to cope with the wetter North Island country newly cleared of rain forest. The dual-purpose British breeds Lincoln and English Leicester began to find favour in these districts. These sheep were highly suited to foraging amongst charred forest remains and keeping regrowth down. Much of the North Island pasture owes its foundation to them.

As the export meat industry developed, farmers in the South Island began searching for a dual-purpose sheep suited to the drier, easier grassland tracts. English Leicester, Lincoln and Romney were all crossed with Merino to create the New Zealand Halfbred. From successive interbreeding emerged the Corriedale — a fine-wool, meat-producing dual specialist.

Although the Merino's influence has diminished, today it has an established home grazing native grasses and tussock to the extremes of the Southern Alps snowline. At lower altitudes the New Zealand Halfbred finds its niche and the Corriedale grazes rolling countryside and South Island lowlands.

Towards the turn of the century another trend began in the North Island. The Romney, New Zealand's most popular breed today, was about to emerge from relative obscurity. The Lincoln and the English Leicester had done their work developing pasture, but their performance on land that had been tamed could not match the Romney.

From about 1910 the Romney's popularity gathered momentum. A distinct New Zealand type was developed and its coarse wool and prime lamb production laid the basis for New Zealand's meat and wool industry. During the 1960s 75 per cent of the national flock was Romney. Today that proportion has declined to 50 per cent. Crosses based on the Romney have been found ideally suited to particular conditions — the Perendale on the hard hill country and the high-fertility Coopworth on the lowlands.

The Drysdale is another breed of Romney origin and although a specialist carpet-wool producer, it is still considered a dual-purpose sheep.

Of the meat breeds, the Southdown has played a major part in the evolution of other "Down" breeds — Suffolk, South Suffolk, Hampshire, South Hampshire, Dorset Down and South Dorset Down. Two of Britain's oldest breeds, the Ryeland and the Dorset Horn, have been used to create the Poll Dorset and these three breeds are the only New Zealand meat sires which owe nothing to the Southdown. Lambs from the meat breeds reach their export potential at rapid rates (between 12 and 20 weeks) and after slaughter are shipped from New Zealand, many reaching a variety of northern hemisphere markets in time for Christmas.

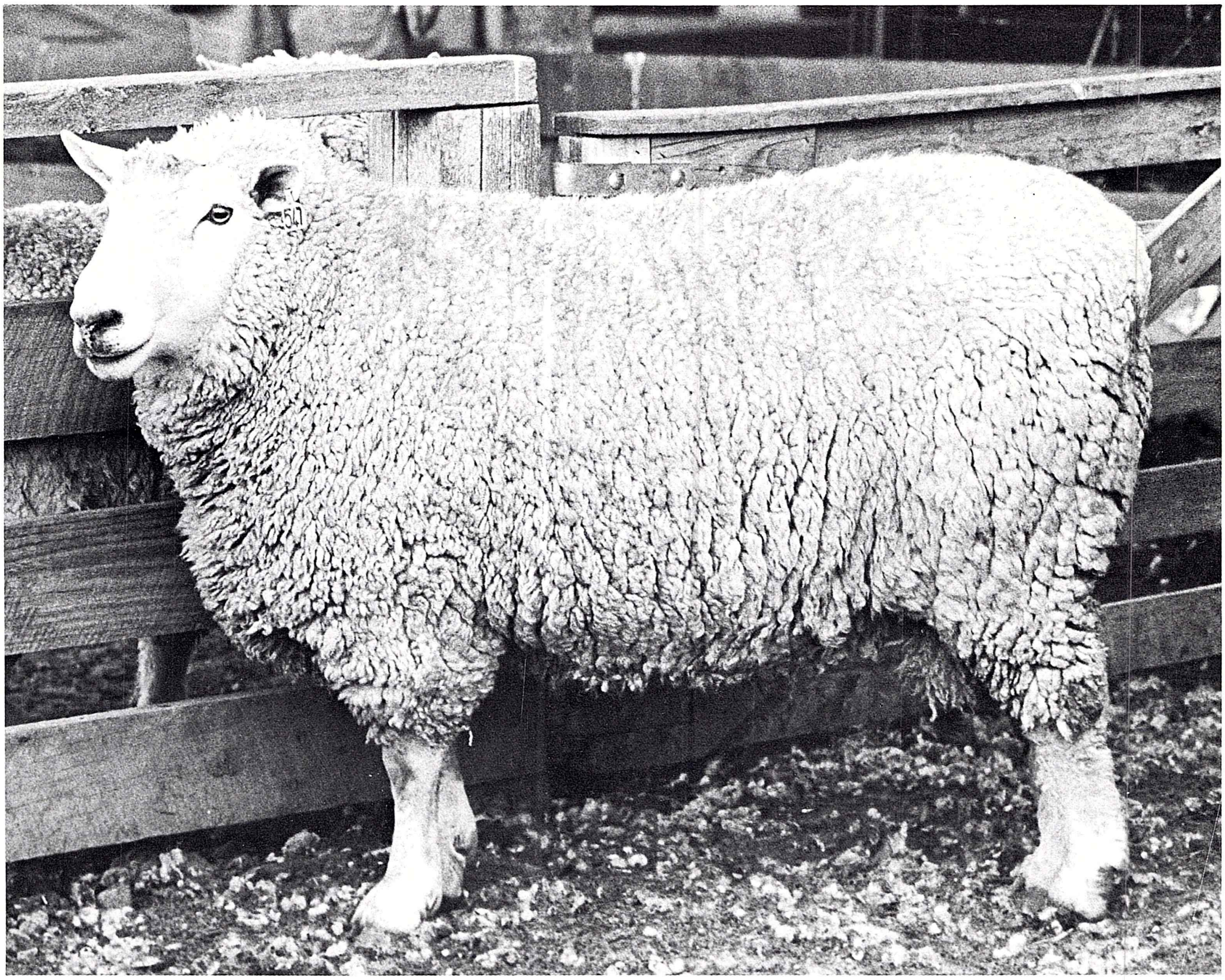
The annual lamb crop is more than 40 million of which 27 million are slaughtered each year for export. The remainder is held as farm replacement stock. At the freezing works pelts from slaughtered lambs are treated with a chemical enabling the wool to be plucked or "sliped" from the skin. Slipe wool represents 15 per cent of the annual 350,000-tonne wool production.

However the bulk of New Zealand's wool is shorn from live sheep — in some regions twice a year. Shearing is a demanding manual skill carried out on the farms in specially constructed sheds by either a contractor or the farmer and his family. A unique New Zealand shearing style, emphasising economy of effort, has been perfected and is copied by most other sheep-growing nations. The shearing gangs are responsible for sorting the wool into distinct types and packaging it for export in 150-kilogram bales. The New Zealand Wool Board helps maintain a quality control by training shearers, wool handlers and classers.

Farmers decide for themselves how they will sell their wool. They can either sell privately or send it to one of the eight auction centres which handle threequarters of the total clip. Wool brokers act as agents for the farmer and are responsible for presenting the wool at auction.

New Zealand exports more than 90 per cent of its total wool production to 50 countries mostly in the northern hemisphere. About 70 per cent of the clip is ideally suited to carpet manufacture.

It's worldwide reputation ensures a continuing demand for New Zealand wool — the premium natural fibre for a wide range of end-uses.



BORDERDALE

The Borderdale is a New Zealand breed developed in the 1930s from crossing Border Leicester with Corriedale. Since the 1970s, further interbreeding has strengthened the strain. Evolved for fertile dry areas of the South Island, the Borderdale excels in producing meat and wool on light or irrigated pastures and in rolling hill country. Strict breeding criteria are laid down emphasising high lambing, wool weights and good fat-lamb hindquarters. A mandatory culling of 30 per cent is required in the ewe flock and 20 per cent in the ram selections. The wool is a fine crossbred type and is finding increasing favour with home spinners. Commercially, it is used in hand-knitting yarns and in heavyweight apparels.

CLASSIFICATION
Longwool, dual-purpose breed with equal emphasis on meat and wool.

FOUND
Mainly in Canterbury on improved or irrigated pastures.

DESCRIPTION
Medium-to-large sheep with white face and legs clear of wool although the poll is usually covered.

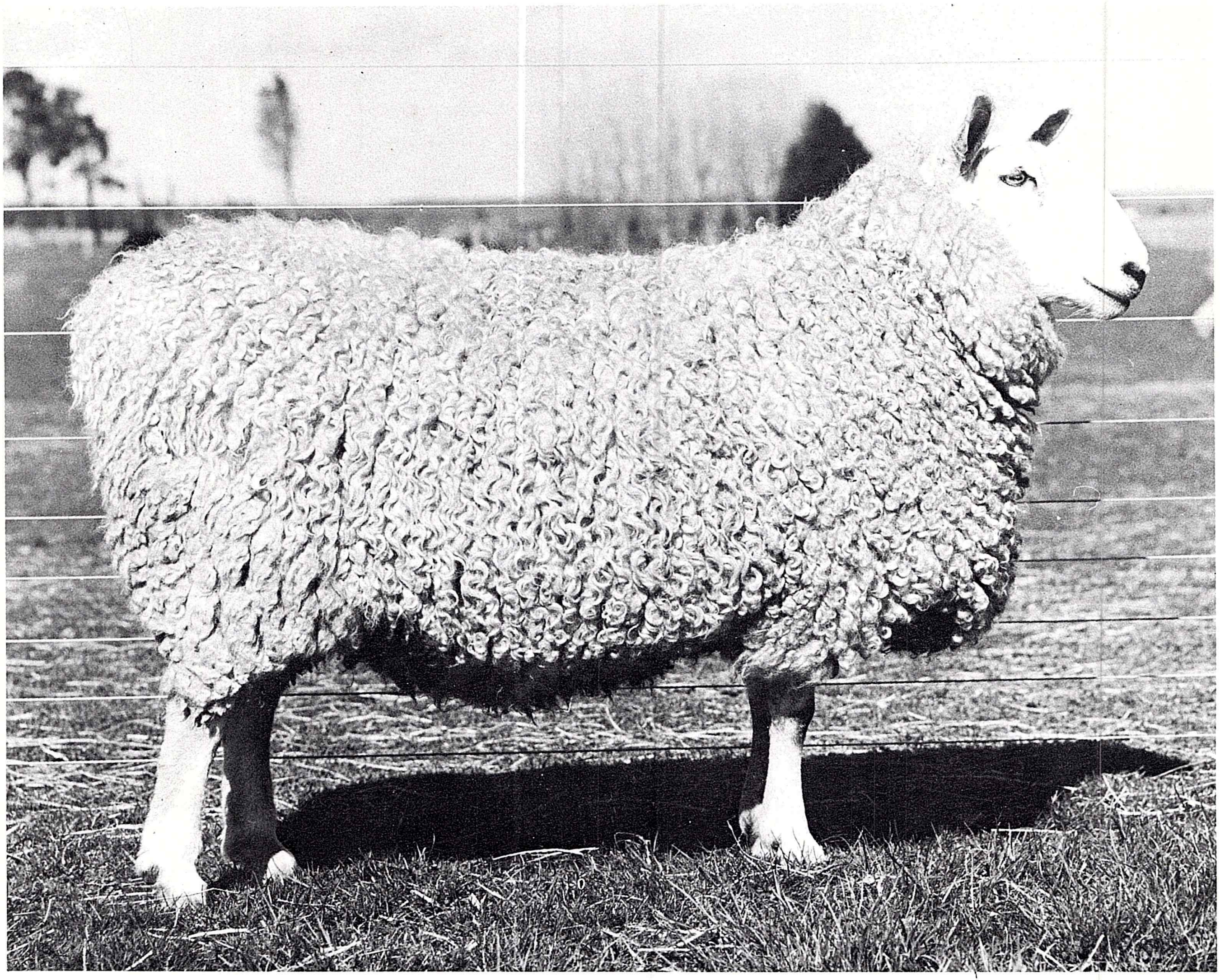
NUMBERS
800,000

BODY WEIGHT
50–60 kg

WOOL PRODUCTION

Fibre diameter	30–35 microns
Staple length	100–150 mm
Fleece weight	4.5–6 kg

LAMB PRODUCTION
110–130 per cent



BORDER LEICESTER

It is thought the Border Leicester evolved on the English-Scottish border, from the English Leicester and Cheviot. The English geneticist Robert Bakewell's improvement to the English Leicester in the 1700s also had an influence. The breed arrived in New Zealand in 1859. After refrigeration was introduced in the 1880s, the Border Leicester was used as a crossing sire to produce heavyweight lambs and wether mutton. Noted for its high fertility and good mothering qualities, today the Border Leicester is used to increase fertility of commercial Romney and Corriedale flocks. It has been used to develop New Zealand's Border-Romney cross (Coopworth) and the Border-Corriedale cross (Borderdale). The wool is long and lustrous with individual staples easily separated and ending in a small curl. It is used for upholstery, dress fabrics, lining materials and hand-knitting wools.

CLASSIFICATION
Dual-purpose breed mostly used for creating crossbred ewes. Long, coarse, lustrous wool.

FOUND
Widespread throughout New Zealand mainly in ram-breeding flocks.

DESCRIPTION
Large, long-legged sheep with clear white face and legs. Roman nose.

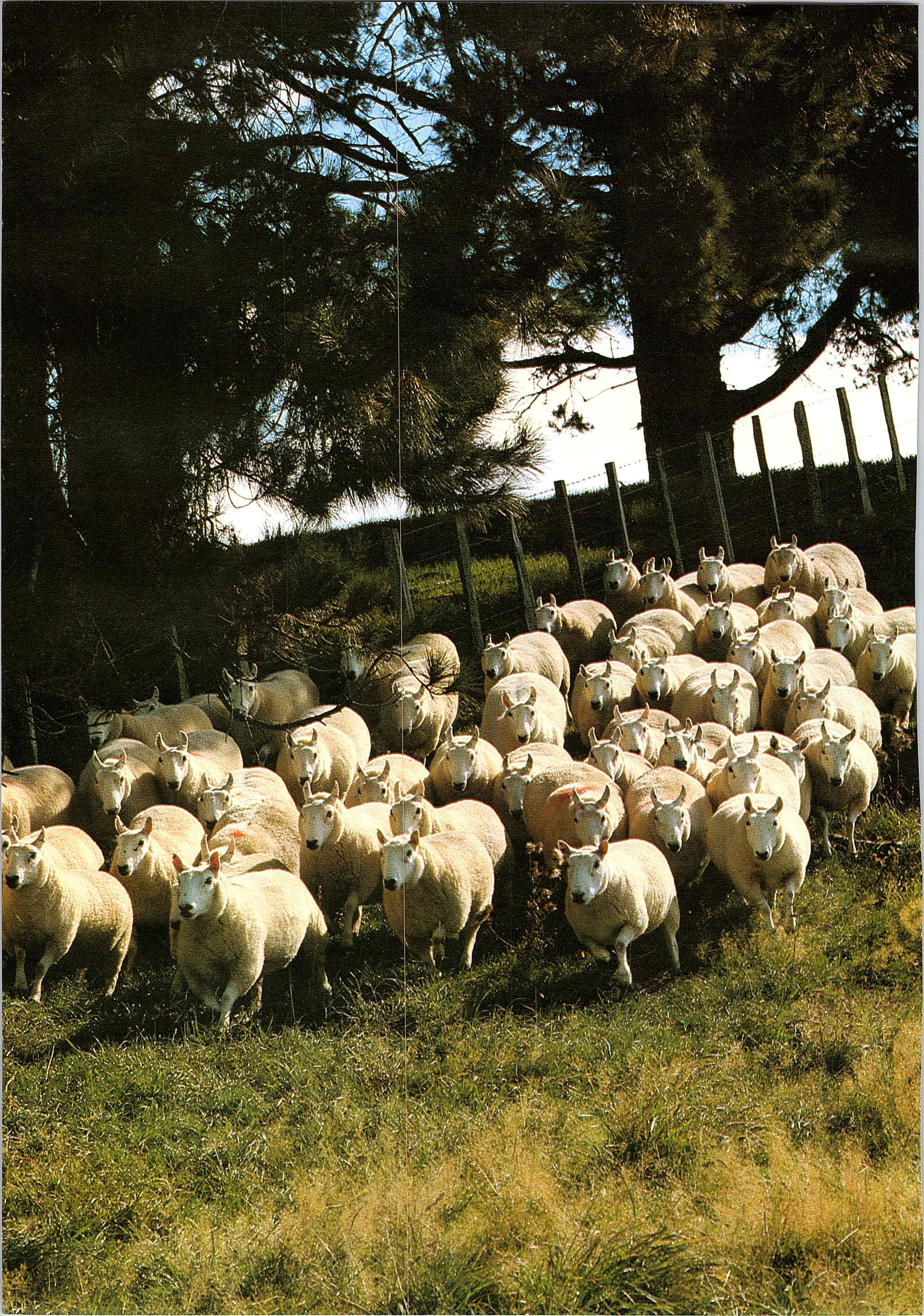
NUMBERS
100,000

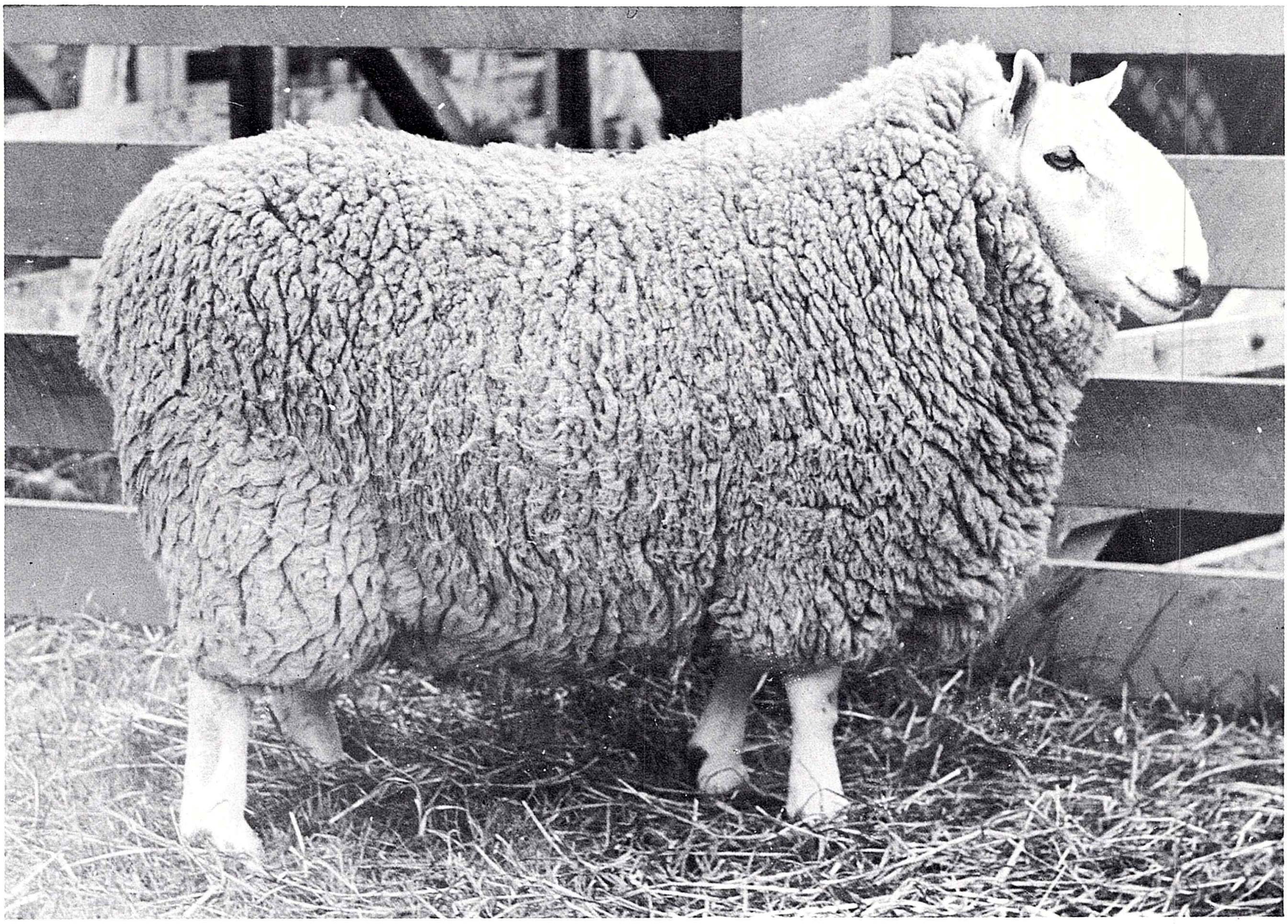
BODY WEIGHT
50–60 kg

WOOL PRODUCTION

Fibre diameter	37–40 microns
Staple length	150–200 mm
Fleece weight	4.5–6 kg

LAMB PRODUCTION
110–130 per cent





Cheviots were introduced to New Zealand in 1845. During the next 50 years large flocks were established in Southland, Otago, and in the North Island between Napier and Taupo. In Britain sheep similar to the Cheviot have grazed the borderlands between England and Scotland and the Scottish Highlands for centuries. A hardy animal, it can survive on poor pasture withstanding long periods of semi-starvation in very cold conditions. Horns have only in recent times been bred from the Cheviot. The breed declined in New Zealand from 1910 owing to light fleece weight and difficulty in mustering. However, during the 1940s the Cheviot enjoyed a revival when crossed with the Romney. This crossbred gave improved growth rates, hardier sheep and easier mustering on hard hill country. The Perendale is derived from this cross. Because of its bulk and resilience Cheviot wool is used in carpets, knitwear and tweeds.

CHEVIOT

CLASSIFICATION
Dual-purpose breed used both as a sire for creating crossbred ewes and as a terminal crossing sire for lamb production. Bulky, low-lustre wool.

FOUND
Widespread, mainly in ram-breeding flocks.

DESCRIPTION
Compact, short-legged sheep with white face and legs free of wool.

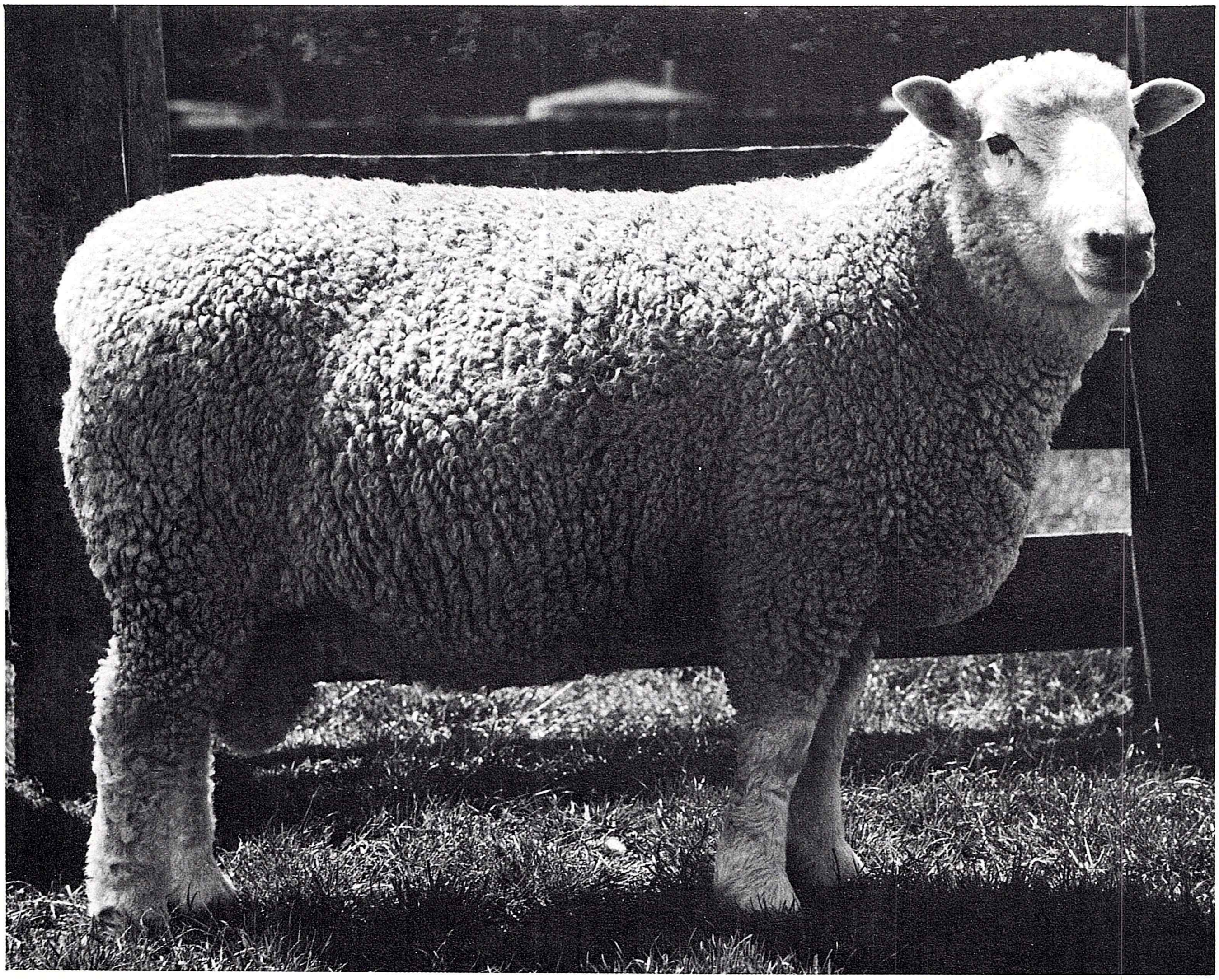
NUMBERS
98,000

BODY WEIGHT
40–50 kg

WOOL PRODUCTION

Fibre diameter	28–33 microns
Staple length	75–100 mm
Fleece weight	2–3 kg

LAMB PRODUCTION
90–110 per cent



COOPWORTH

Developed in the 1960s from Border Leicester and Romney breeds, the Coopworth has rapidly become popular at the Romney's expense on wetter lowlands and easier hill country. The breed was registered in 1968 and because of its success numbers have increased to more than 11 million. The breed takes its name from Professor Ian Coop of Lincoln College in Canterbury, who initiated research on which the Coopworth Society bases strict breeding requirements. This performance data emphasises high lambing percentages, heavy fleece weights, physical soundness, rapid weight gains, easy care and mothering abilities. Overseas interest has increased in recent years and the breed has been exported to Eastern Europe, the United States and extensively to Australia. The Coopworth produces a lustrous fleece, noted for its good length, colour and spinning qualities. It is used in heavier apparels and carpets.

CLASSIFICATION
Dual-purpose breed with equal emphasis on meat and wool. Coarse, long, lustrous wool.

FOUND
Widespread throughout New Zealand on lowlands and improved hill country.

DESCRIPTION
Medium-to-large sheep with white face and legs clear of wool. Usually some wool on the poll.

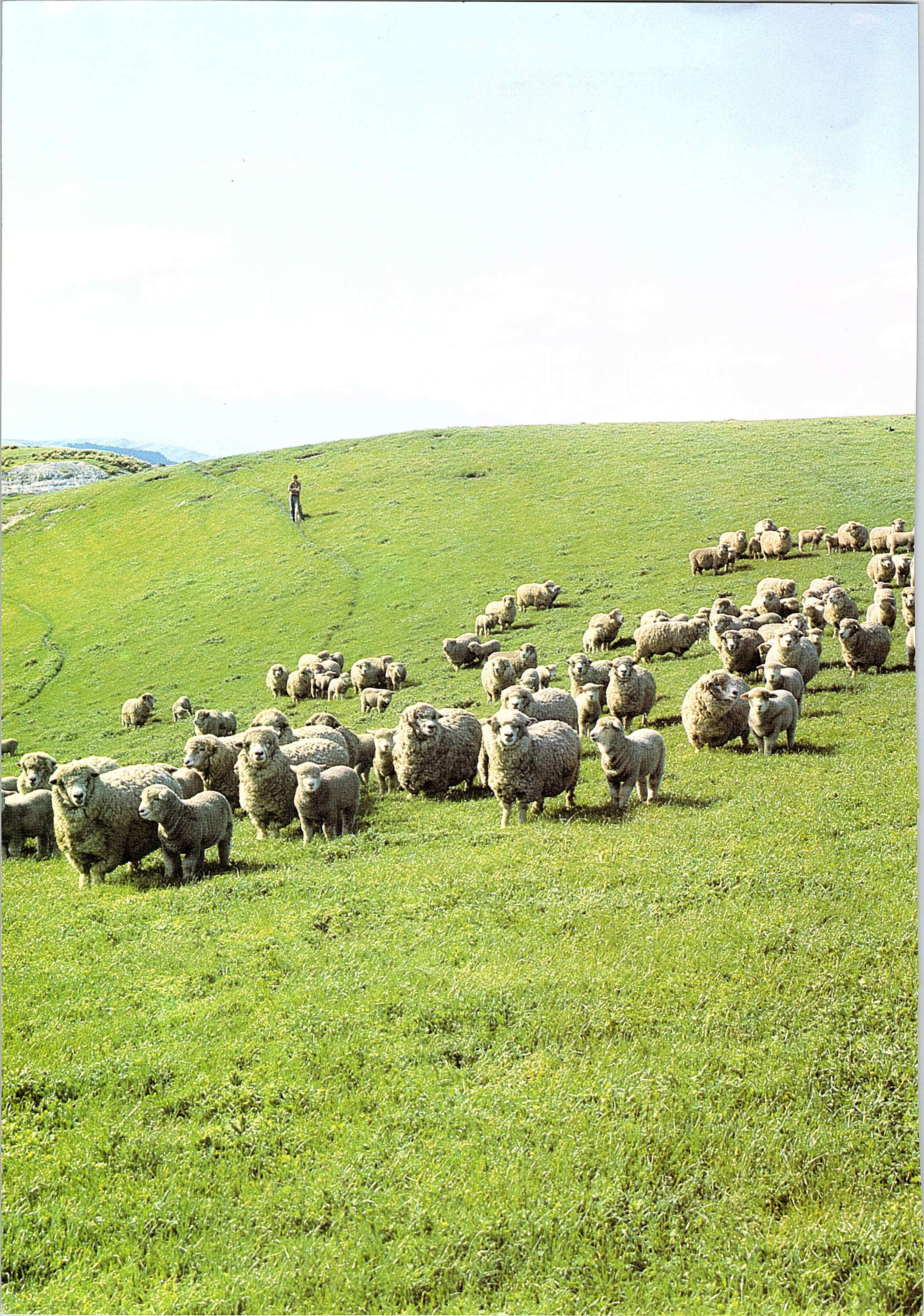
NUMBERS
11.5 million

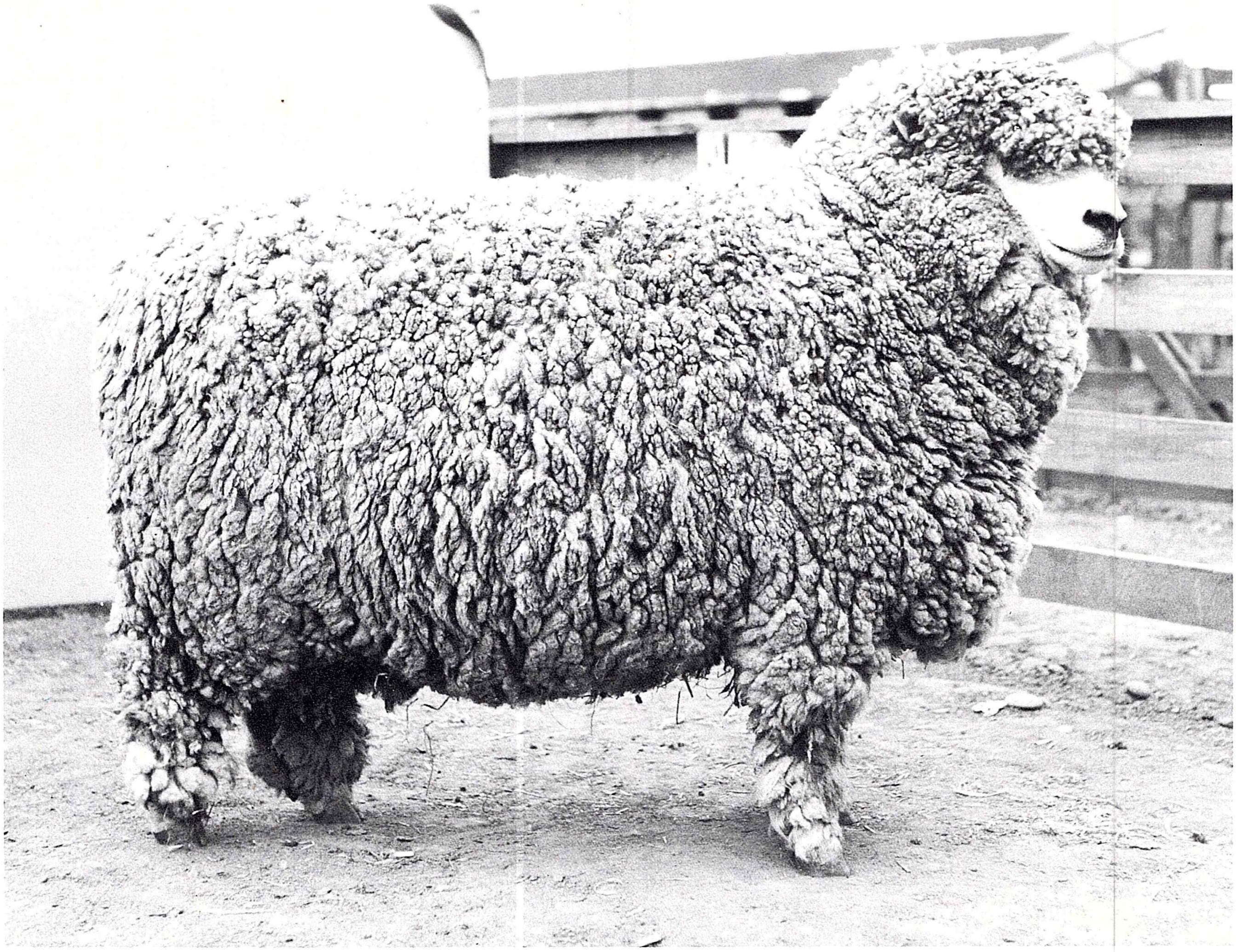
BODY WEIGHT
50–60 kg

WOOL PRODUCTION

Fibre diameter	35–39 microns
Staple length	125–175 mm
Fleece weight	4.5–6 kg

LAMB PRODUCTION
110–130 per cent





CORRIEDALE

Bred to thrive on drier, easier South Island hill country, the Corriedale was New Zealand's first distinct indigenous breed. Pioneered by James Little, manager of Corriedale Station in North Otago, the Corriedale emerged in 1868 by mating rams of British longwool breeds to Merino ewes and interbreeding the progeny. Lincoln and English Leicester rams were used mainly, but the Romney and Border Leicester also served as sires to the initial Halfbreds. Interbred selections produced a dual-purpose sheep with a good heavy fleece. The Corriedale was recognised as an "inbred halfbred" in the Sheep Breeders' Association Flock Book in 1906. It has enjoyed continued popularity as a dual-purpose breed and has found favour with overseas breeders who look to New Zealand to provide top quality replacement stock. New Zealand Corriedales have provided the foundation of flocks in Australia, Uruguay, Argentina, Chile, China and elsewhere. The wool is used for medium-weight outer garments, worsteds and light tweeds.

CLASSIFICATION

Dual-purpose breed with equal emphasis on meat and wool. Medium to fine wool.

FOUND

Mainly in Canterbury with some in Otago and Marlborough on drier lowland.

DESCRIPTION

Medium-sized sheep with white face and legs and black nose. They usually have some wool on the face and a well-covered poll.

NUMBERS

5 million

BODY WEIGHT

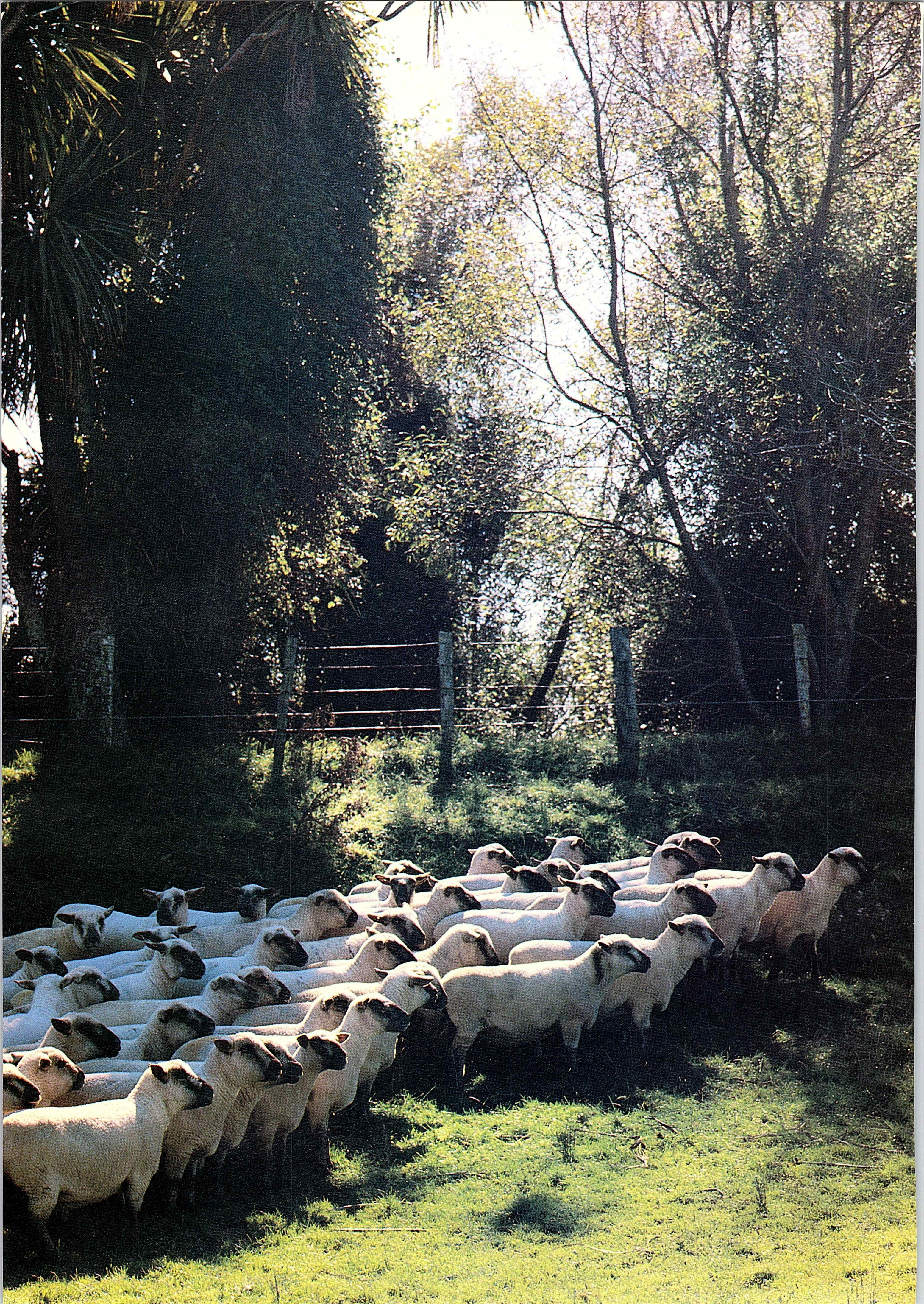
45–55 kg

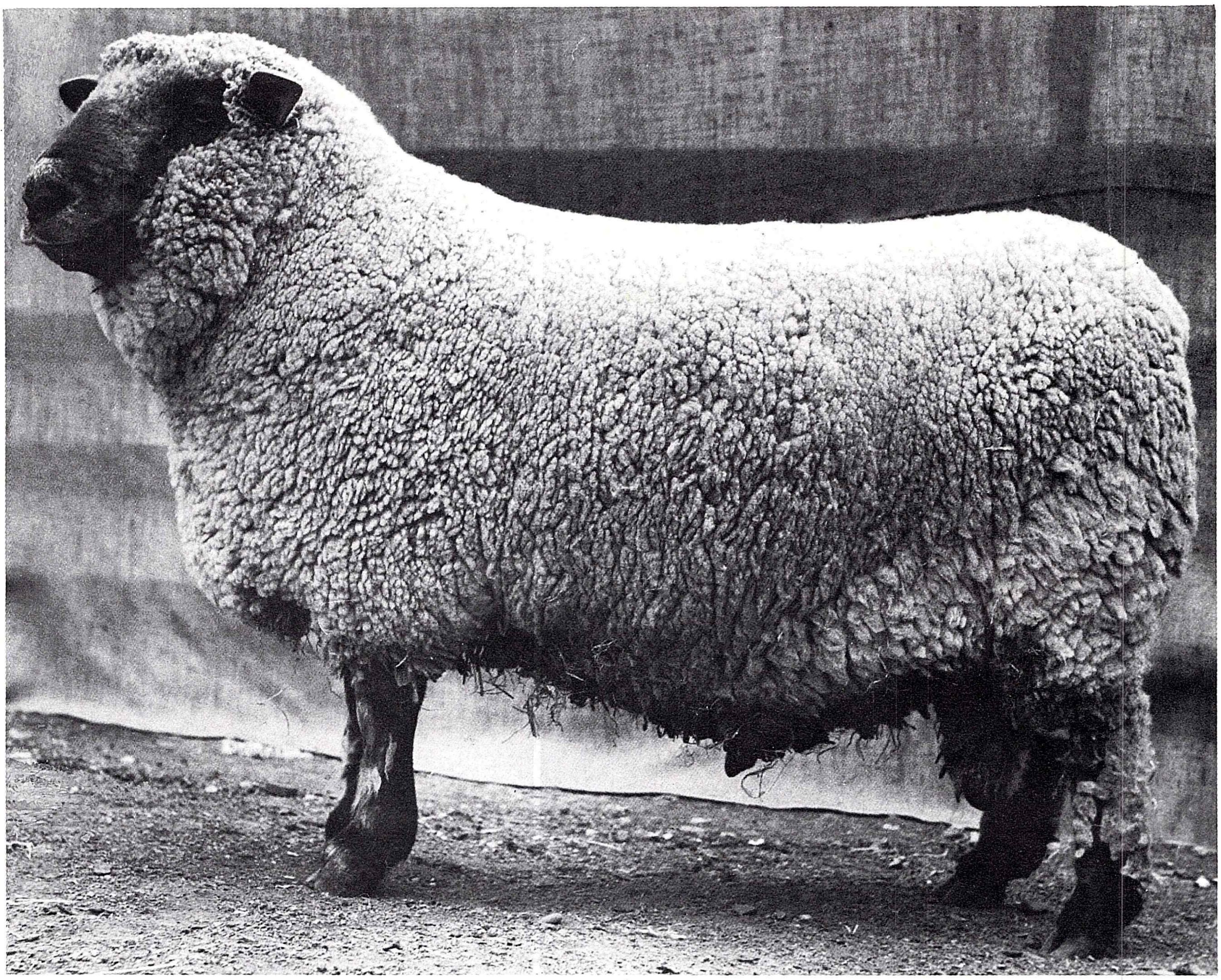
WOOL PRODUCTION

Fibre diameter	28–33 microns
Staple length	75–125 mm
Fleece weight	4.5–6 kg

LAMB PRODUCTION

90–120 per cent





The Dorset Down was popular in Britain from about the 1820s and was first introduced to New Zealand in 1921. It soon died out and today's flocks are evolved from stock imported from 1947 onwards. The demand for lean meat made the Dorset Down a good sire for the production of prime export lambs. There are now 175 registered flocks. The Dorset Down was crossed with the Southdown to produce the South Dorset Down. The full-handling and springy wool is used in specialised industries (such as paper-making felts) and is often blended with other wools to give extra elasticity and crispness. It is also used in the production of high-quality hosiery and fine knitting wools.

DORSET DOWN

CLASSIFICATION
Meat breed used as a terminal crossing sire. Short, Down wool with some pigmented fibres.

FOUND
On lowland pasture throughout New Zealand.

DESCRIPTION
Medium-sized sheep with brown face, ears and legs with wool on poll and cheeks.

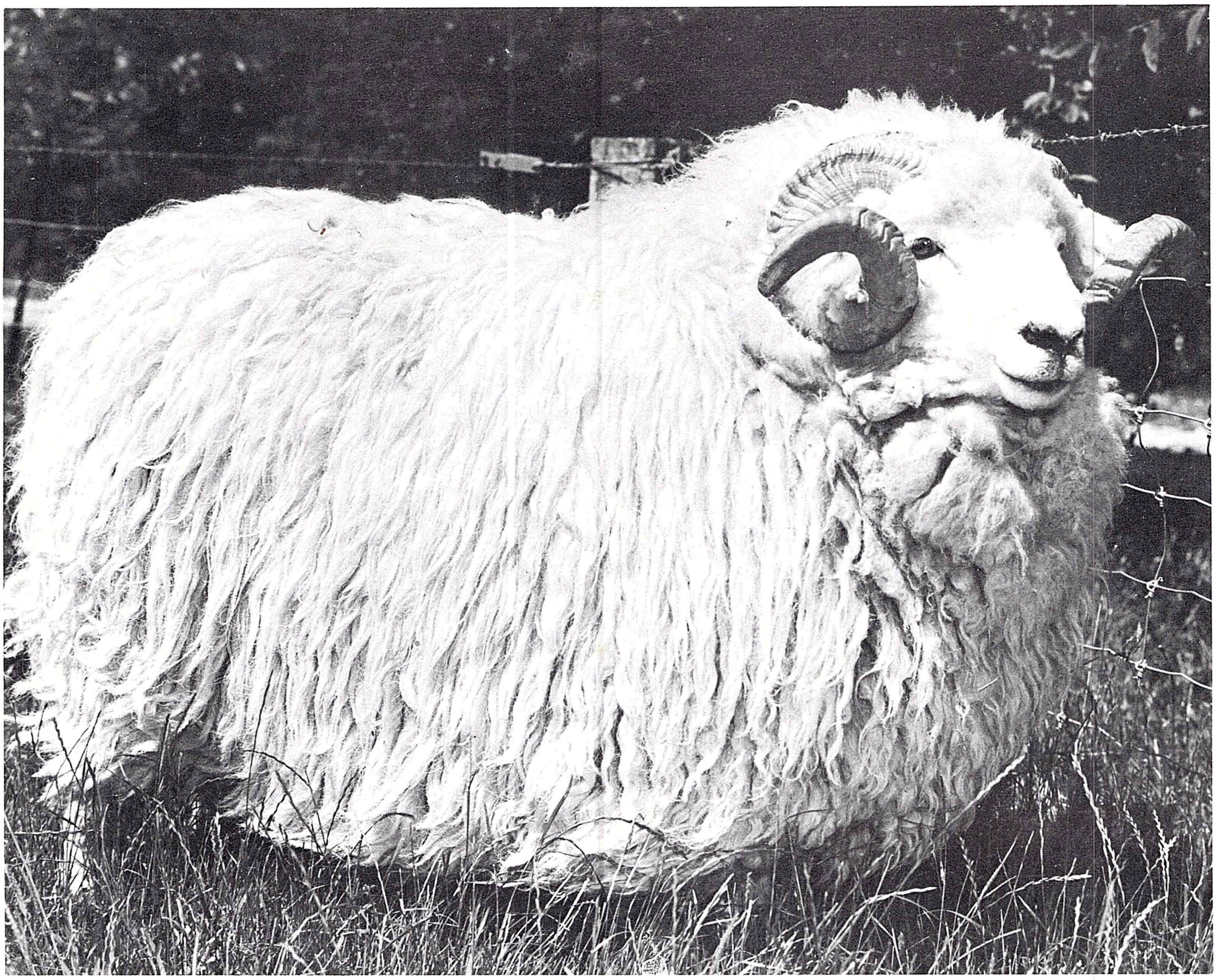
NUMBERS
51,000

BODY WEIGHT
50–55 kg

WOOL PRODUCTION

Fibre diameter	26–29 microns
Staple length	50–75 mm
Fleece weight	2–3 kg

LAMB PRODUCTION
100–120 per cent



The Drysdale is a story of science. Research by geneticist and hair biologist Doctor Francis Dry at Massey University during the 1930s and 1940s led to the discovery of the inheritance of hairiness. It was found that certain Romneys carried a powerful gene which produced a fleece with large, medullated primary fibres and horn growth on a normally hornless parent breed. In the 1950s this genetic freak was commercially developed as the Drysdale and its wool has now replaced Scottish Blackface imports as the hard fibre component of our carpet blends. Despite being a speciality carpet wool producer, the Drysdale maintains a quality meat standard. Tukidales and Carpetmasters, other strains developed since the Drysdale, have similar wool characteristics.

DRYSDALE

CLASSIFICATION
Dual-purpose breed with equal emphasis on meat and wool. Heavily medullated, extremely coarse, long wool.

FOUND
Widespread throughout New Zealand in almost all environments. Also in Australia.

DESCRIPTION
Medium-to-large sheep with white face and legs usually clear of wool. Rams have heavy horns while ewes have short horns.

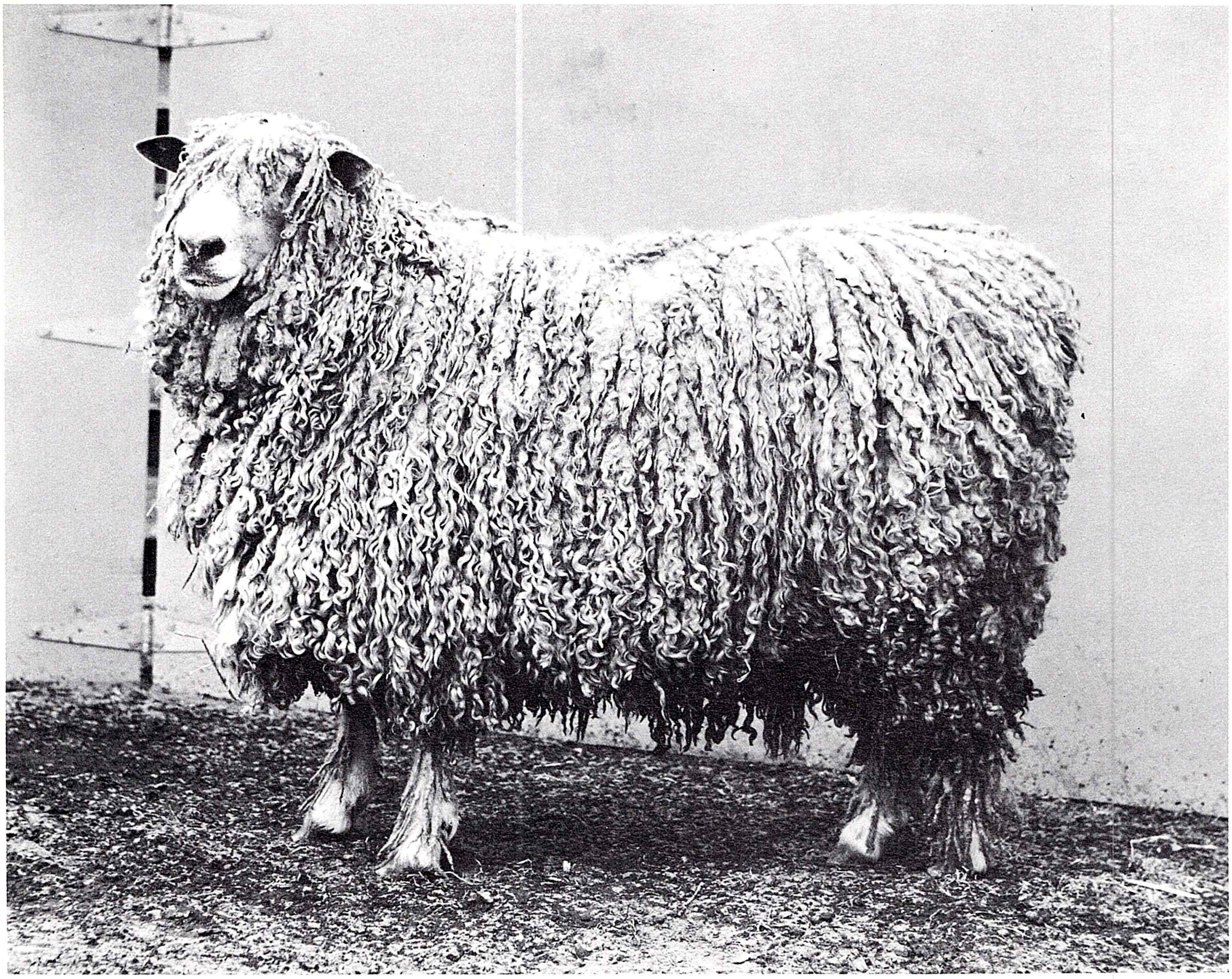
NUMBERS
600,000

BODY WEIGHT
45–55 kg

WOOL PRODUCTION

Fibre diameter	40 microns plus
Staple length	200–300 mm
Fleece weight	5–7 kg

LAMB PRODUCTION
90–120 per cent



The English Leicester was a pioneer breed, well suited to wetter regions and rough grazing in North Island hill country, where the Merino had been tried and found unsuitable. It was with the earliest sheep imports to New Zealand and was used extensively as a crossing sire to develop sheep best suited to New Zealand conditions. In the United Kingdom the Leicester Longwool is a long-established breed. It underwent major changes in the 18th century when an animal genetics pioneer, Robert Bakewell, began breeding for a smaller earlier-maturing carcase, greater fat coverage and shorter legs. His success led to the Leicester's use in developing other longwool breeds. At the turn of the century the English Leicester vied for popularity with Lincolns and became established as New Zealand's third most common breed. However, from the early 1900s flocks declined, although the breed is still crossed with Merinos to produce the New Zealand Halfbred. The heavy, curly, lustrous wool is even in length and fibre diameter. Braids, linings for suits, coatings, costume clothes and furnishing fabrics are among the end-uses.

ENGLISH LEICESTER

CLASSIFICATION
Dual-purpose breed mostly used for creating crossbred ewes and first cross Halfbred rams. Long, coarse, lustrous wool.

FOUND
Mainly in Otago, Canterbury, Wairarapa and Hawke's Bay in ram-breeding flocks.

DESCRIPTION
Large sheep with open face and wool-covered poll.

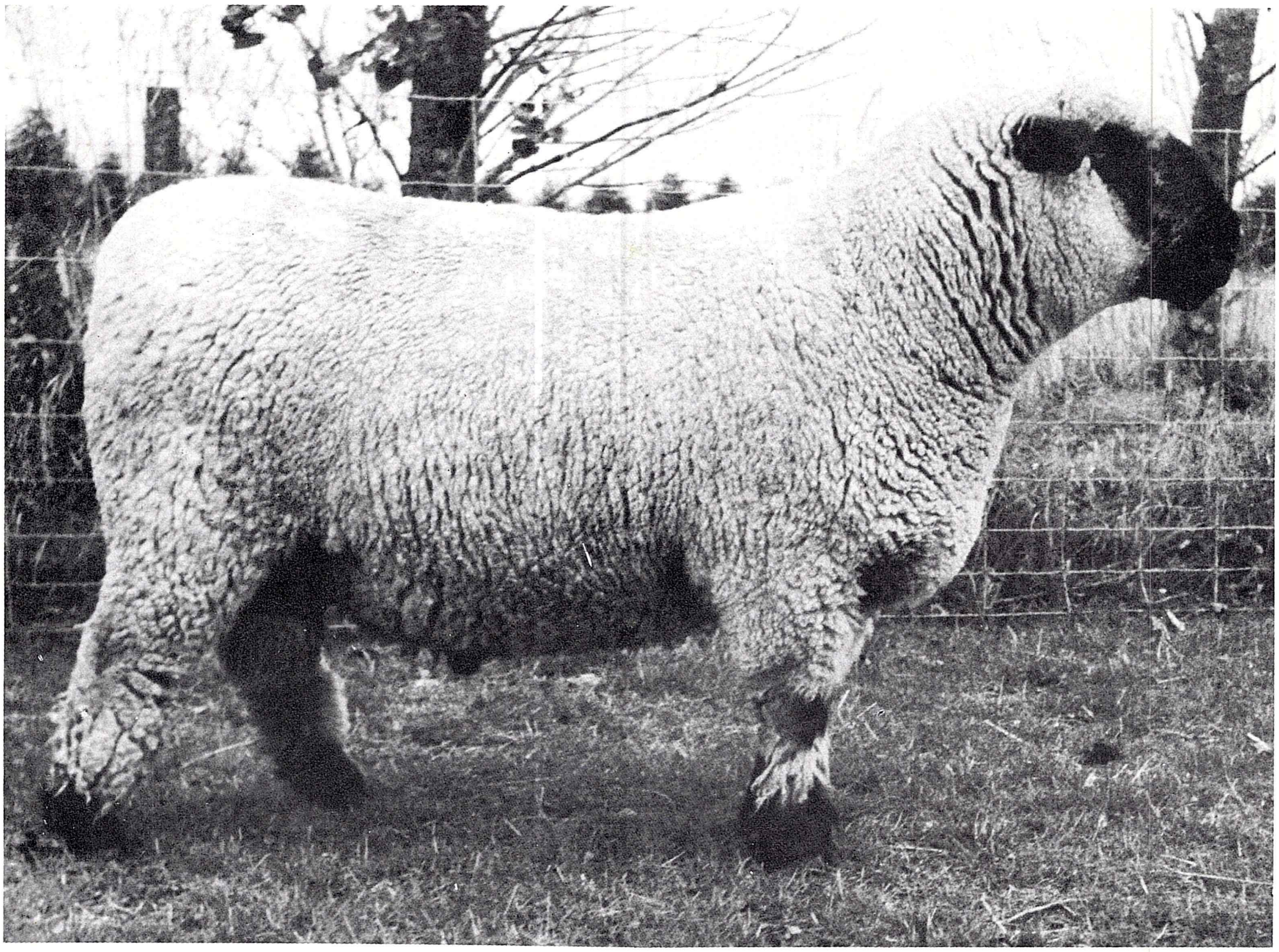
NUMBERS
Under 30,000

BODY WEIGHT
55–65 kg

WOOL PRODUCTION

Fibre diameter	37–40 microns
Staple length	150–200 mm
Fleece weight	5–6 kg

LAMB PRODUCTION
100–120 per cent



The Hampshire was developed in Britain early last century by crossing Wiltshire and Berkshire ewes with Southdown rams. It arrived in New Zealand in 1861, but registrations of the breed lapsed in the early part of this century. Its popularity was revived in 1951. The Hampshire's rapid weight gains, while growing a minimum of fat, have since established it as an important terminal sire for the meat industry. In the United States the Hampshire is the most popular sire for prime lambs. The breed is suited to a wide variety of climatic conditions and thrives on New Zealand's lowland pasture. The fine Down-type wool is used for woollen hosiery, hand-knitting yarns and flannels.

HAMPSHIRE

CLASSIFICATION
Meat breed used as a terminal crossing sire. Short Down wool.

FOUND
Most areas of New Zealand.

DESCRIPTION
Large sheep with dark brown face, ears and legs. Wool on poll and cheeks.

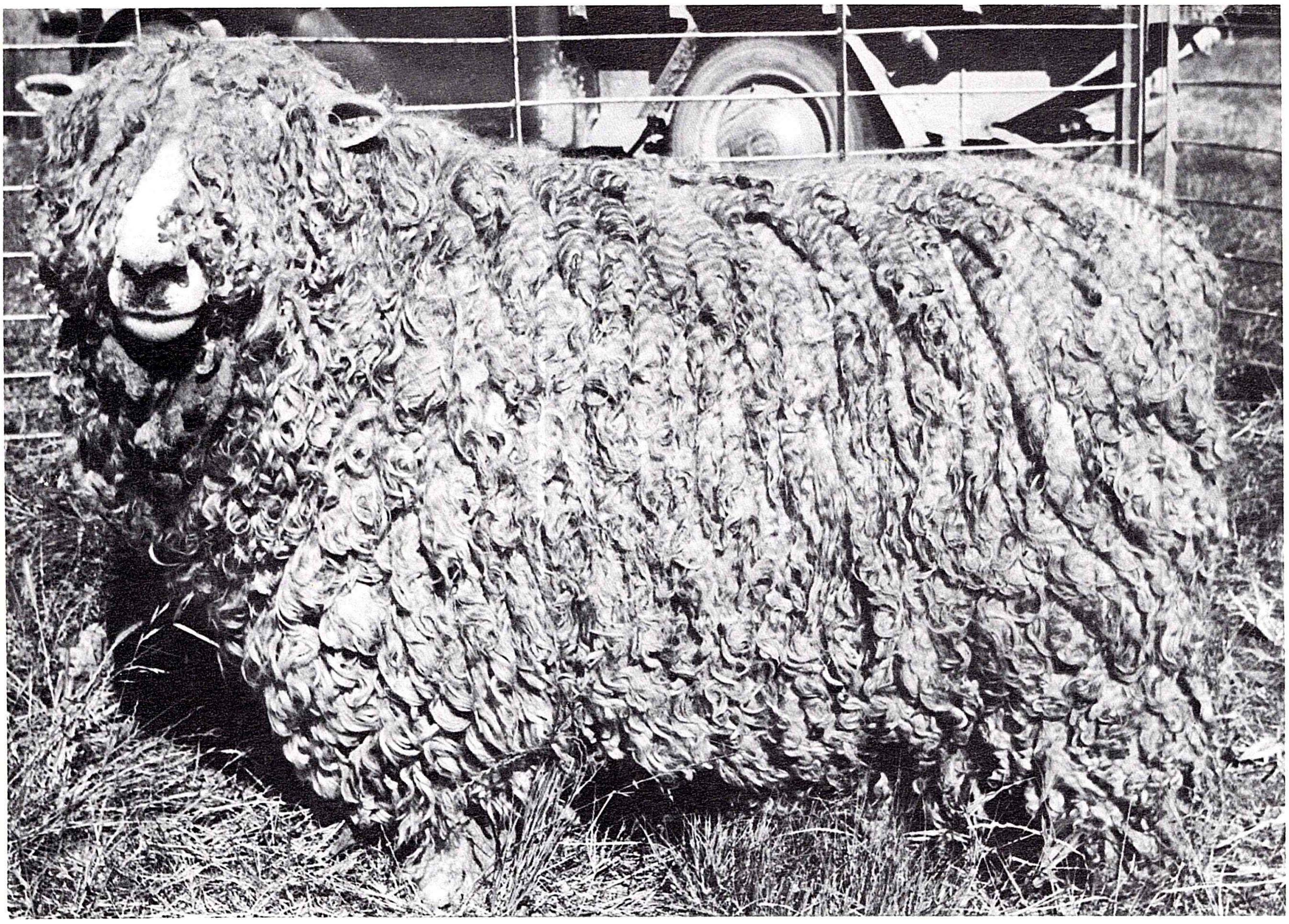
NUMBERS
Under 30,000

BODY WEIGHT
55–65 kg

WOOL PRODUCTION

Fibre diameter	26–30 microns
Staple length	50–75 mm
Fleece weight	2–3 kg

LAMB PRODUCTION
100–120 per cent



The Lincoln was the New Zealand colonial farmers' favourite breed in heavily-timbered, wetter regions where it adapted readily to grazing on recently burnt-over forests. The strongly-grown wool resisted snagging and break as the Lincoln scrambled through charred timber to forage for the lush regrowth emerging from the ashes. Because of its ability to survive in these conditions, the Lincoln's popularity was second only to the Merino late last century. But the breed's mortality rate increased as the natural soil fertility diminished and from the early 1900s it was gradually replaced by the Romney. In early breeding programmes the Lincoln served as a cross-breeding sire and although numbers have dwindled to only 12 registered flocks, many New Zealand sheep still have some Lincoln heritage. The wool is used for products requiring lustre and soft handle. It is being used increasingly as a blend with mohair.

LINCOLN

CLASSIFICATION
Dual-purpose breed used mainly for creating crossbred ewes. Long, coarse, lustrous wool.

FOUND
Canterbury, Wairarapa and Hawke's Bay in ram-breeding flocks.

DESCRIPTION
Large, heavily-built sheep with long, coarse wool which hangs over the face from the poll.

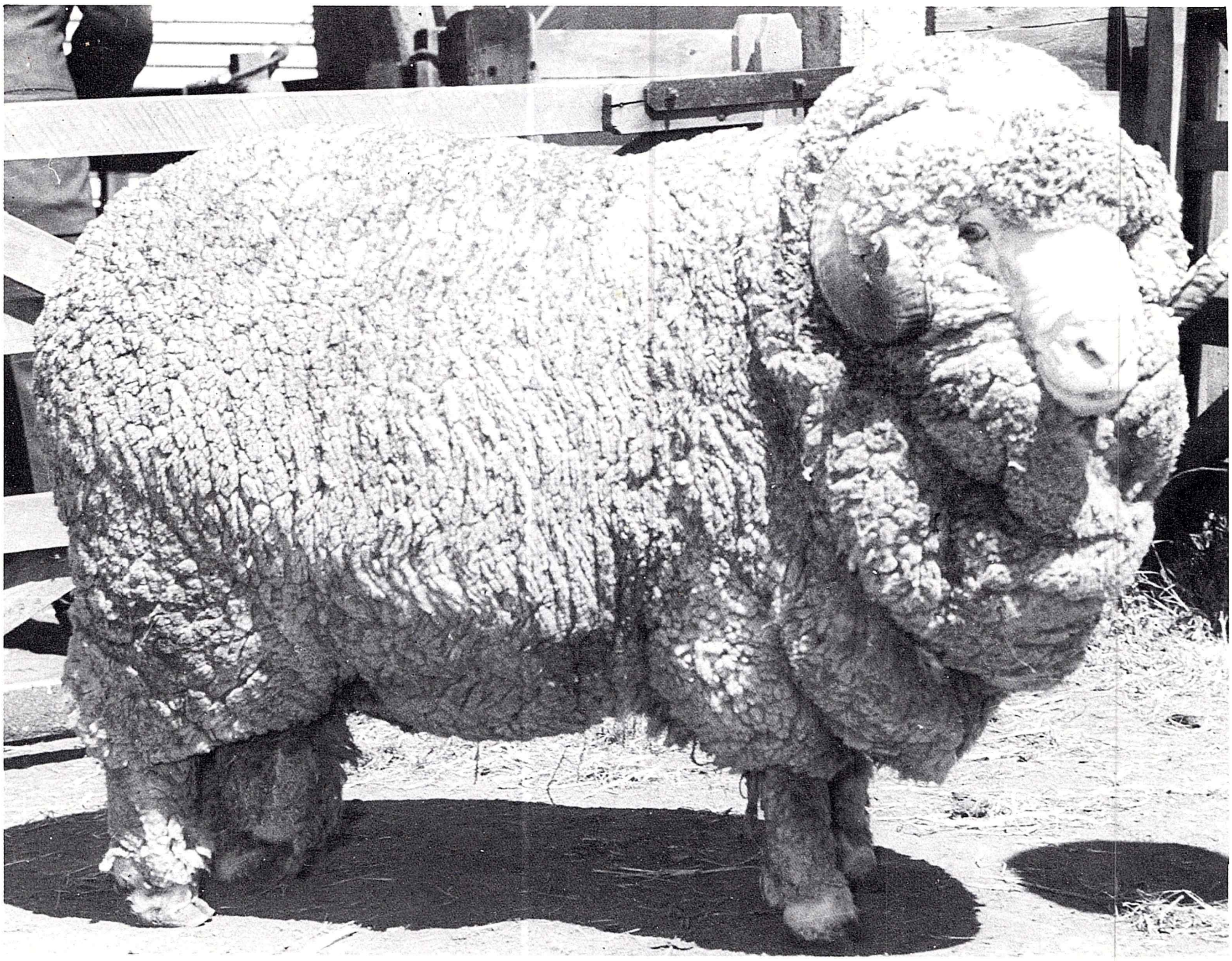
NUMBERS
Under 10,000

BODY WEIGHT
55–65 kg

WOOL PRODUCTION

Fibre diameter	39–41 microns
Staple length	175–250 mm
Fleece weight	5–7 kg

LAMB PRODUCTION
100–120 per cent



The Merino was the first sheep in New Zealand. Four Merinos were landed by Captain Cook in 1773. But Cook's sheep did not survive and 60 years elapsed before James Wright re-introduced the breed to Mana Island near Wellington in 1834. The Merino remained the dominant breed until the turn of the century when numbers reached 14 million. But since then the Merino's influence on the sheep industry has diminished. It was replaced on lowlands and in wetter North Island districts by the Lincoln and English Leicester. With the advent of refrigeration, New Zealand farmers wanted a dual-purpose animal and turned away from the slow-maturing specialist wool breed. But it still has a vital place in the rugged South Island high country, where it is the only breed to thrive on the high altitude pastures of native grass. The Merino is the oldest established and most numerous breed in the world and is believed to originate from Spain or North Africa. The fineness of Merino wool stems from an unusually high number of wool fibres — about 50 million compared with 15 million in the Romney. Merino wool is highly regarded for quality woollen and worsted fabrics. Recent developments include a polled Merino and a high fertility Booroolla strain being used increasingly to lift fertility of other breeds.

MERINO

CLASSIFICATION
Speciality fine-wool breed.

FOUND
Mountainous high country of the South Island.

DESCRIPTION
Fine-boned active sheep with white face and legs. Pink nose. All rams and some ewes are horned.

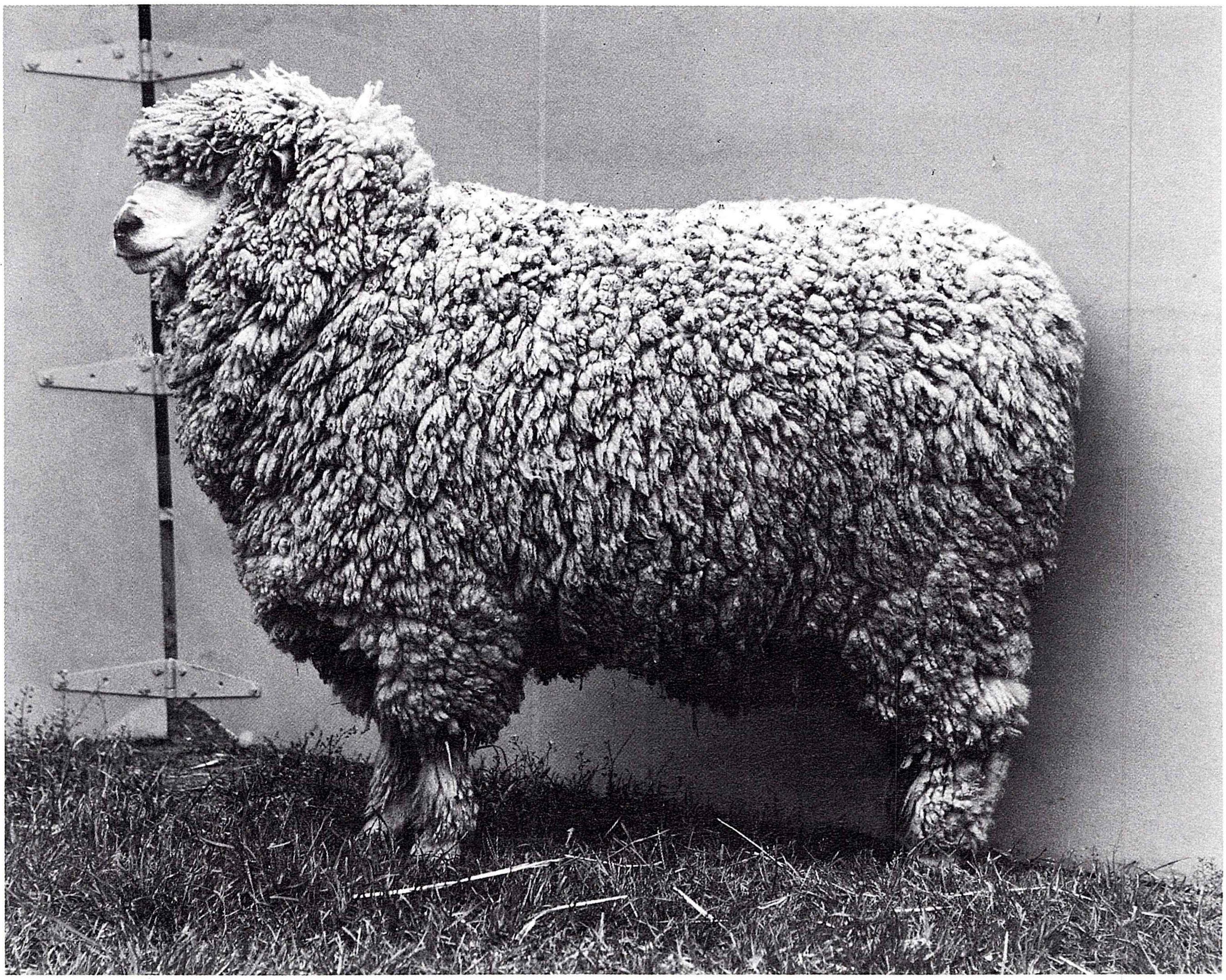
NUMBERS
1.3 million

BODY WEIGHT
35–45 kg

WOOL PRODUCTION

Fibre diameter	19–24 microns
Staple length	65–100 mm
Fleece weight	3.5–5 kg

LAMB PRODUCTION
75–100 per cent



NEW ZEALAND HALFBRED

The Halfbred was developed in New Zealand last century from Merino and one or other of the long-woolled breeds — Leicester, Lincoln or Romney. Like the Corriedale, the Halfbred has improved meat and fertility characteristics of the Merino. It is still common practice to use Merino-longwool first cross rams over interbred Halfbred ewes to maintain hybrid vigour. The Halfbred is found mainly in the foothills of the Southern Alps but can graze with Merinos in the higher regions of the Alps. Wool from the New Zealand Halfbred has gained wide recognition overseas and on occasions has exceeded the high prices paid for finer-type Merino wool. The wool is used for apparels and fine knitwear.

CLASSIFICATION
Dual-purpose breed with emphasis on wool production. Medium-to-fine wool.

FOUND
Widespread in South Island foothills and light rainfall areas.

DESCRIPTION
Medium-sized sheep with white face and legs often covered with wool. Pink nose.

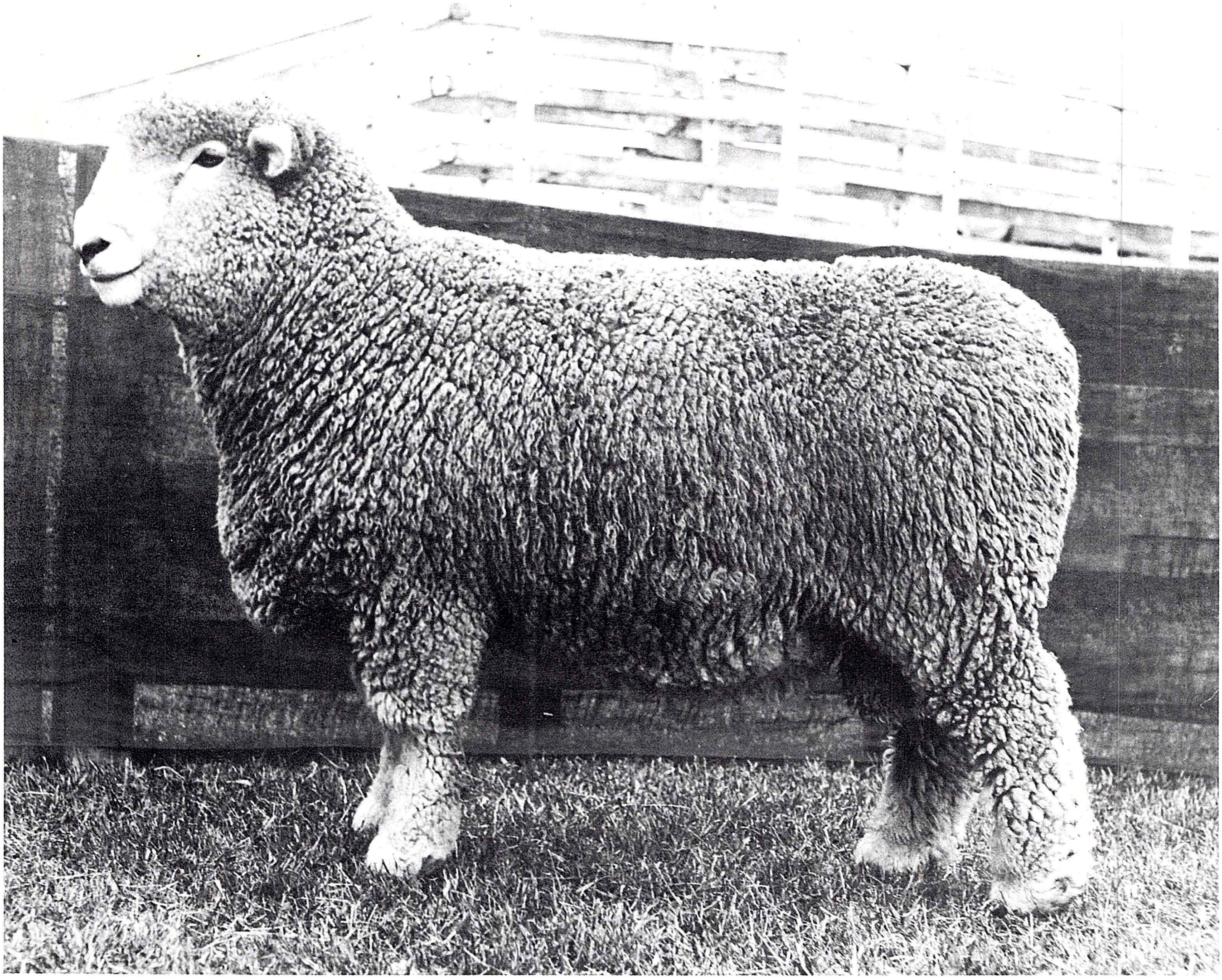
NUMBERS
2.4 million

BODY WEIGHT
40–50 kg

WOOL PRODUCTION

Fibre diameter	25–31 microns
Staple length	75–110 mm
Fleece weight	4-5 kg

LAMB PRODUCTION
85–100 per cent



NEW ZEALAND ROMNEY

The New Zealand Romney dominates the New Zealand sheep industry and currently accounts for almost 50 per cent of the national flock. Originally from the wet fens of south-east England (where the breed is known as Romney Marsh) it arrived in New Zealand in 1853 to form the basis of the Ludlam Flock at Upper Hutt near Wellington. But it was 50 years later before numbers increased rapidly and it began to displace English Leicester and Lincoln on wetter lowland regions. Under these conditions the Romney thrived and underwent considerable change to become a distinct New Zealand breed. In the early 1960s, when the breed extended to every corner of New Zealand, three-quarters of the country's 50 million sheep were Romney. But performances varied widely and New Zealand farmers crossed the Romney with the Cheviot (Perendale) and Border Leicester (Coopworth) to breed sheep better adapted to particular environments. Over the years Romney wool has formed the basis of New Zealand's high reputation as a crossbred wool producer. The breed has found popularity in many overseas countries. About 60 per cent of Romney wool is used in carpet blends. Blankets, coarse dress fabrics, overcoatings and furnishings are other end-uses.

CLASSIFICATION
Dual-purpose breed with equal emphasis on meat and wool. Long, medium-lustre wool.

FOUND
Widespread throughout New Zealand in almost all environments.

DESCRIPTION
Medium-sized sheep with white face and legs usually covered with wool. Clear around the eyes. Black nose.

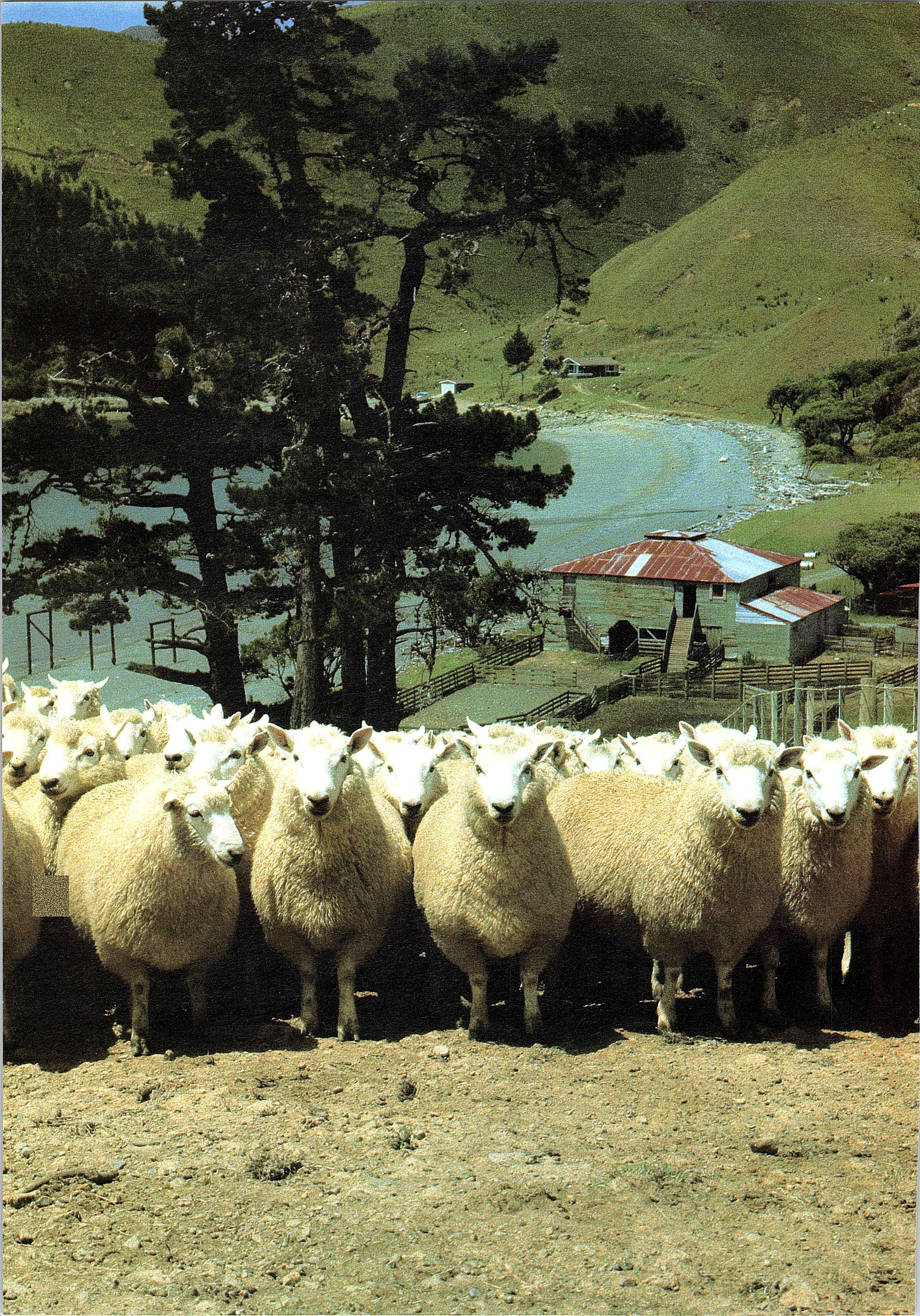
NUMBERS
29 million

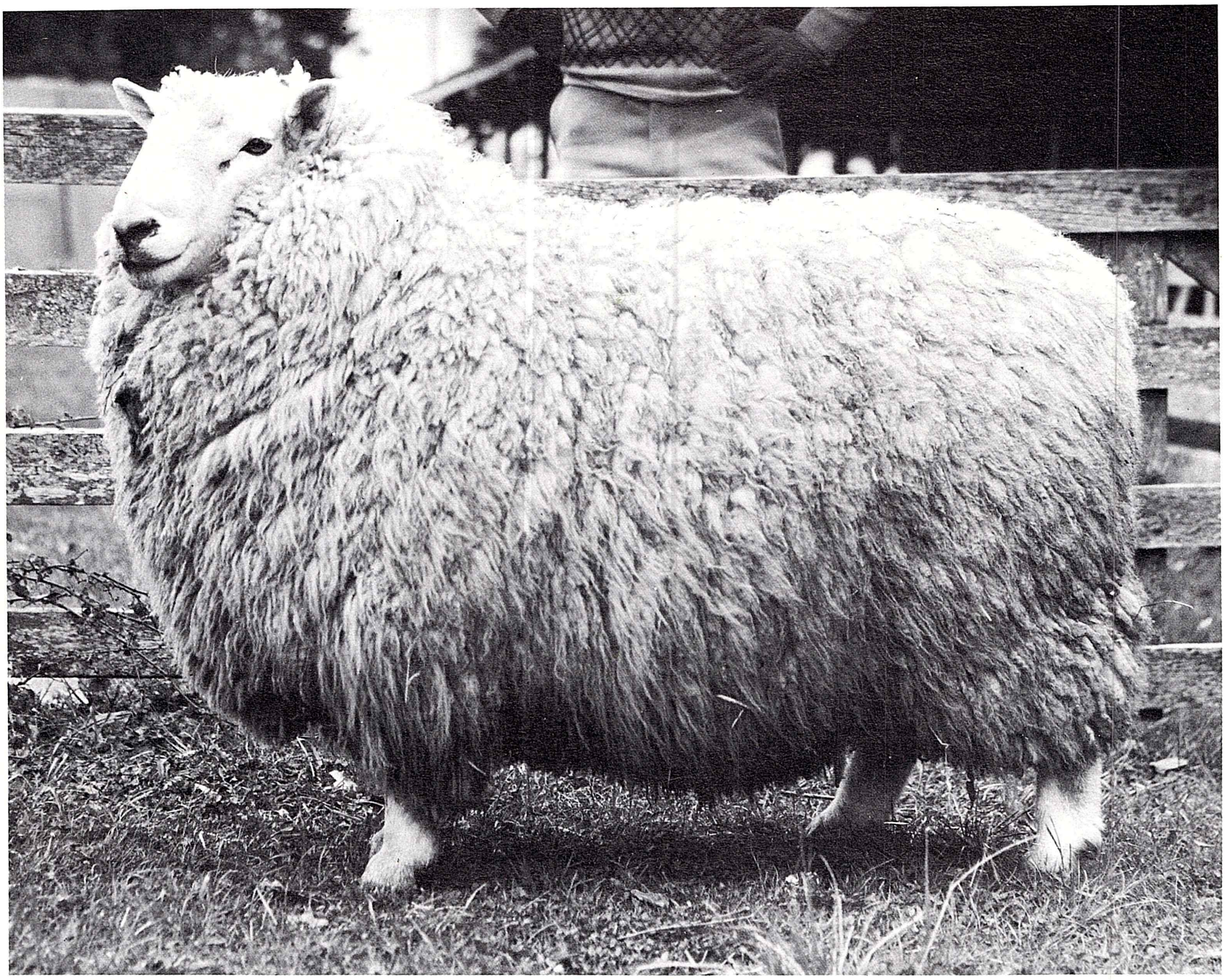
BODY WEIGHT
45–55 kg

WOOL PRODUCTION

Fibre diameter	33–37 microns
Staple length	125–175 mm
Fleece weight	4.5–6 kg

LAMB PRODUCTION
90–120 per cent





PERENDALE

The Perendale is New Zealand's classic hardy hill country forager. A dual meat and wool breed, it will survive well on less palatable feed. It is an "easy-care" breed — easy to muster and presenting few problems at lambing. Lamb growth rates are good, even on hard hill country. The breed was developed by Massey University professor Sir Geoffrey Peren by interbreeding Cheviot and Romney. Registered in 1960, the Perendale's popularity extends throughout New Zealand and in Victoria and New South Wales in Australia. Perendale fleece falls into the finer crossbred range. The wool has exceptional spring which gives good shape retention to knitted garments and adds extra bulk and stand-up ability to carpet pile. It has a high insulation factor in blankets.

CLASSIFICATION
Dual-purpose breed with equal emphasis on meat and wool. Long wool, with low lustre and high bulk.

FOUND
Widespread throughout New Zealand hill country.

DESCRIPTION
Small-to-medium-sized active sheep with prick ears, white face and legs clear of wool. Some wool on the poll. Black nose.

NUMBERS
11 million

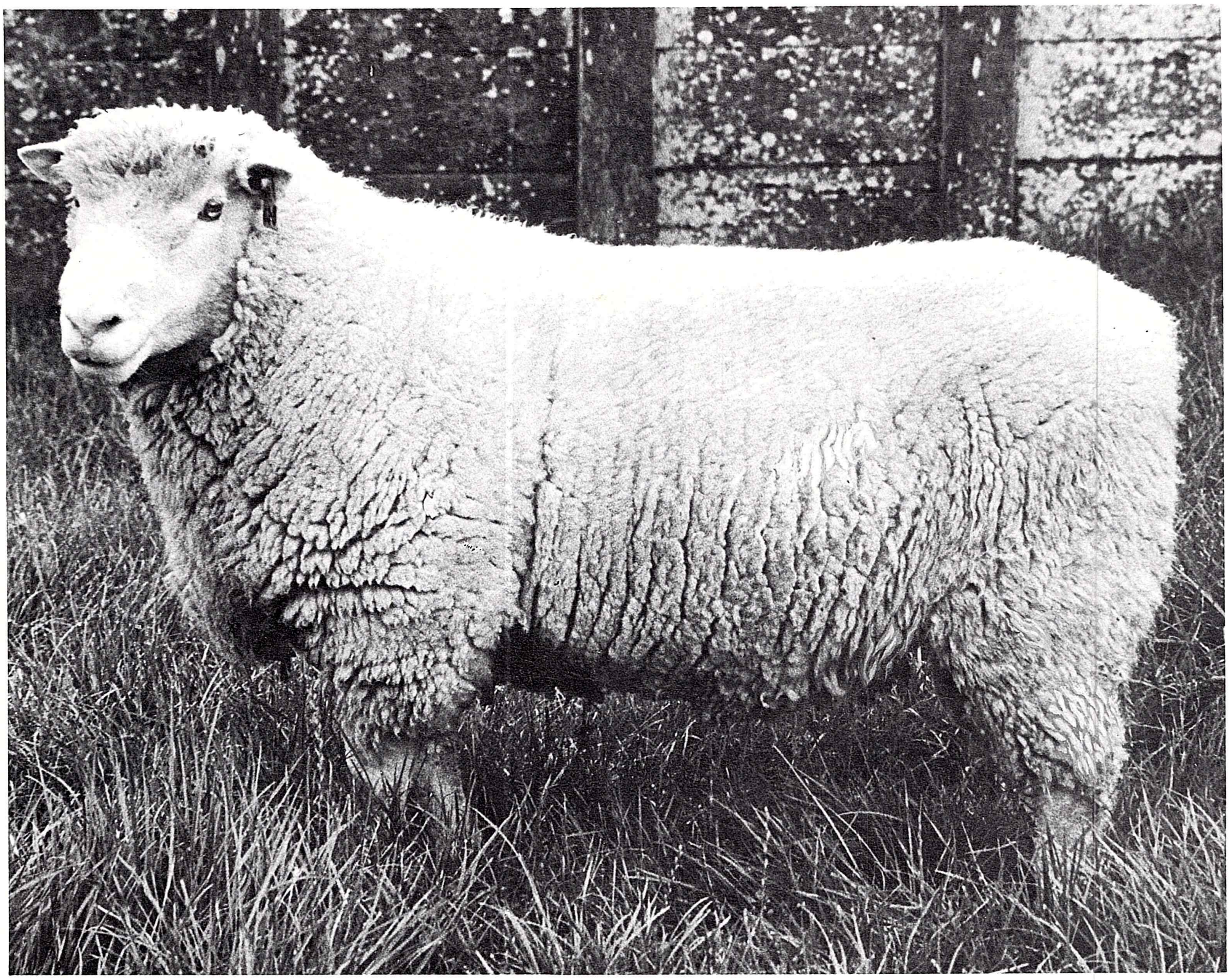
BODY WEIGHT
40–50 kg

WOOL PRODUCTION

Fibre diameter	31–35 microns
Staple length	100–150 mm
Fleece weight	3.5–5 kg

LAMB PRODUCTION
100–120 per cent

10



POLL DORSET & DORSET HORN

The Dorset Horn is a long-established breed from Southern England. The Poll Dorset was developed from the Dorset Horn in Australia by introducing poll genes from the Ryeland and Corriedale. Poll Dorset sheep were first registered in Australia in 1954 and were introduced to New Zealand in 1959. They have the same characteristics as the Dorset Horn, which they have now almost replaced. The Poll Dorset is found in widely different climates. The ewe has an extended breeding season, enabling meat supply to specialist out-of-season markets. Even before scouring the densely-grown wool is remarkably white. Dorset skins have found a fashion market in linings for boots and coats. Hosiery, dress fabrics, flannels and fine tweeds are other products made from Dorset wool.

CLASSIFICATION
Meat breed used mainly as a terminal crossing sire. Short Down wool.

FOUND
Widespread throughout New Zealand.

DESCRIPTION
Large sheep. Pink skin and nose with pale hooves. The polled and horned sheep are similar.

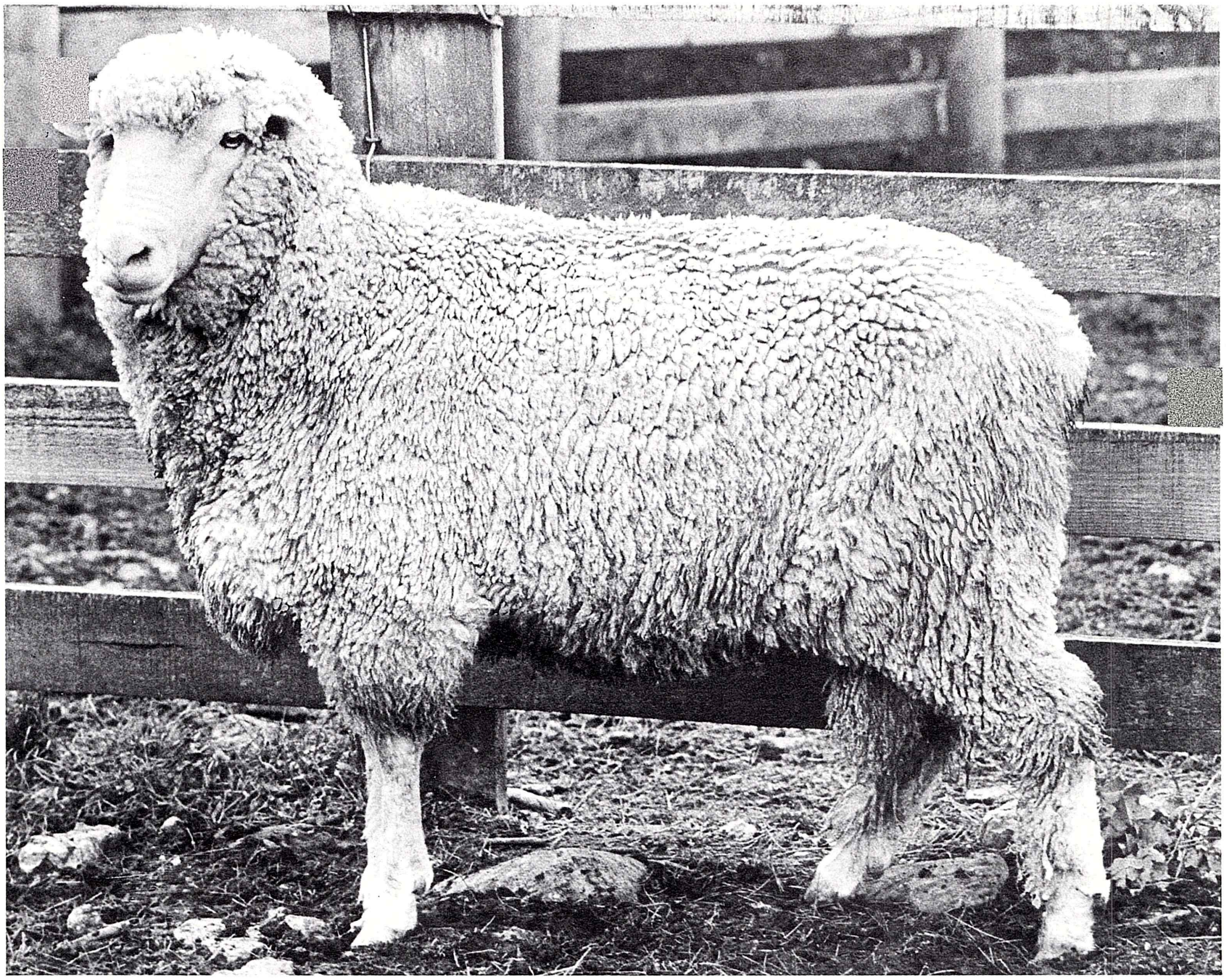
NUMBERS
92,000

BODY WEIGHT
50–60 kg

WOOL PRODUCTION

Fibre diameter	27–32 microns
Staple length	75–100 mm
Fleece weight	2–3 kg

LAMB PRODUCTION
110–130 per cent



The Polwarth was developed in Victoria, Australia, in 1880 by using Lincoln-Merino cross ewes and breeding back to Merino rams. Cross-breeding continued for many years in Australia. In 1932 the Polwarth arrived in New Zealand for the first time. The breed does better than the Merino in wet and cold conditions. Today Polwarths are farmed in Canterbury, Otago, Marlborough, Wairarapa and Hawke's Bay, although in small numbers. The original Polwarth was horned and although horned Polwarth still exist, the polled variety is now more common. The fine wool is highly regarded for worsted fabric manufacture, knitting yarns and apparels.

POLWARTH

CLASSIFICATION
Dual-purpose, fine-wool breed with major emphasis on wool production.

FOUND
Otago, Canterbury, Marlborough, Wairarapa and Hawke's Bay.

DESCRIPTION
Active animals with clear white faces, wool on the poll and pink noses. Today they are mostly polled.

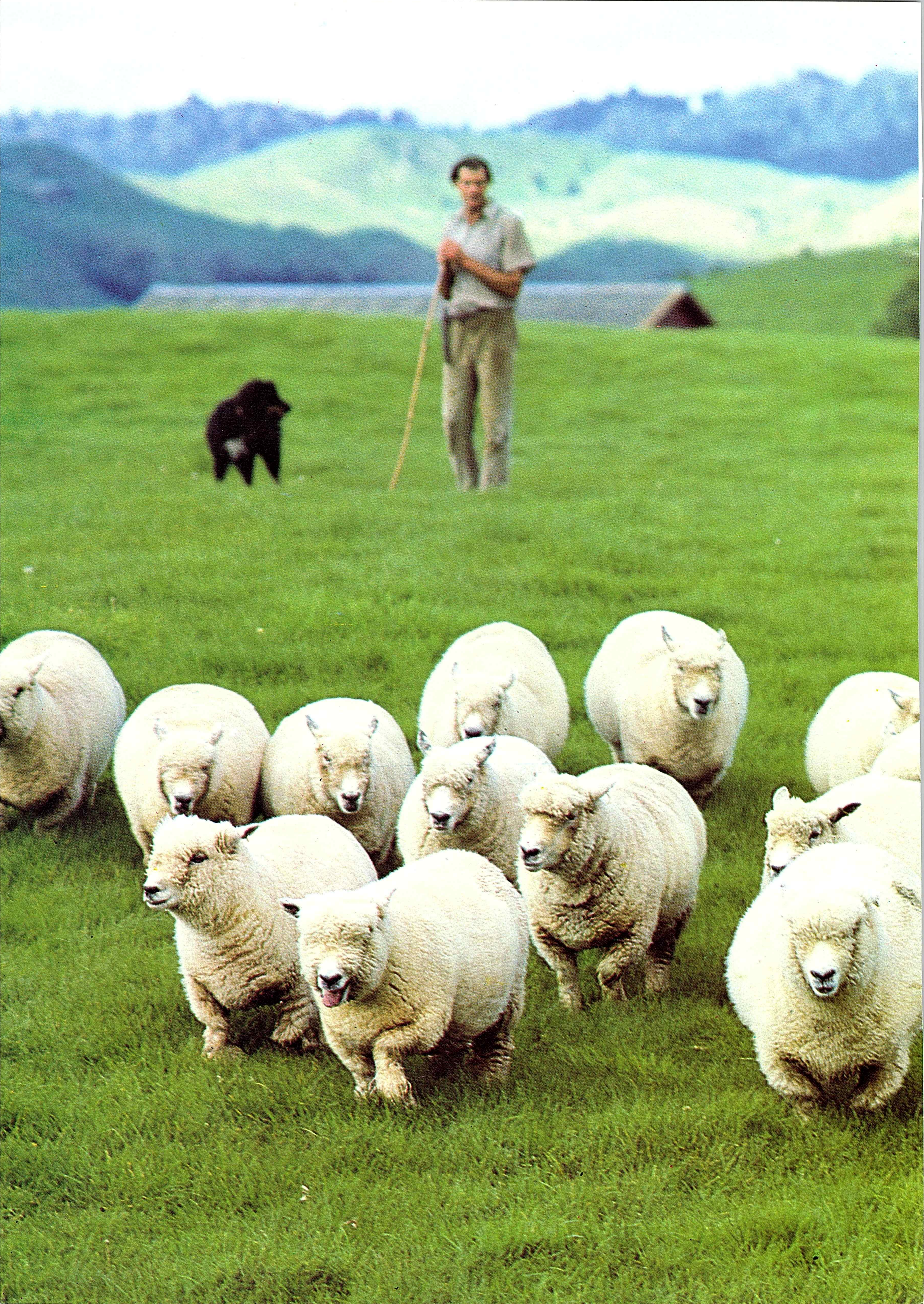
NUMBERS
Under 20,000

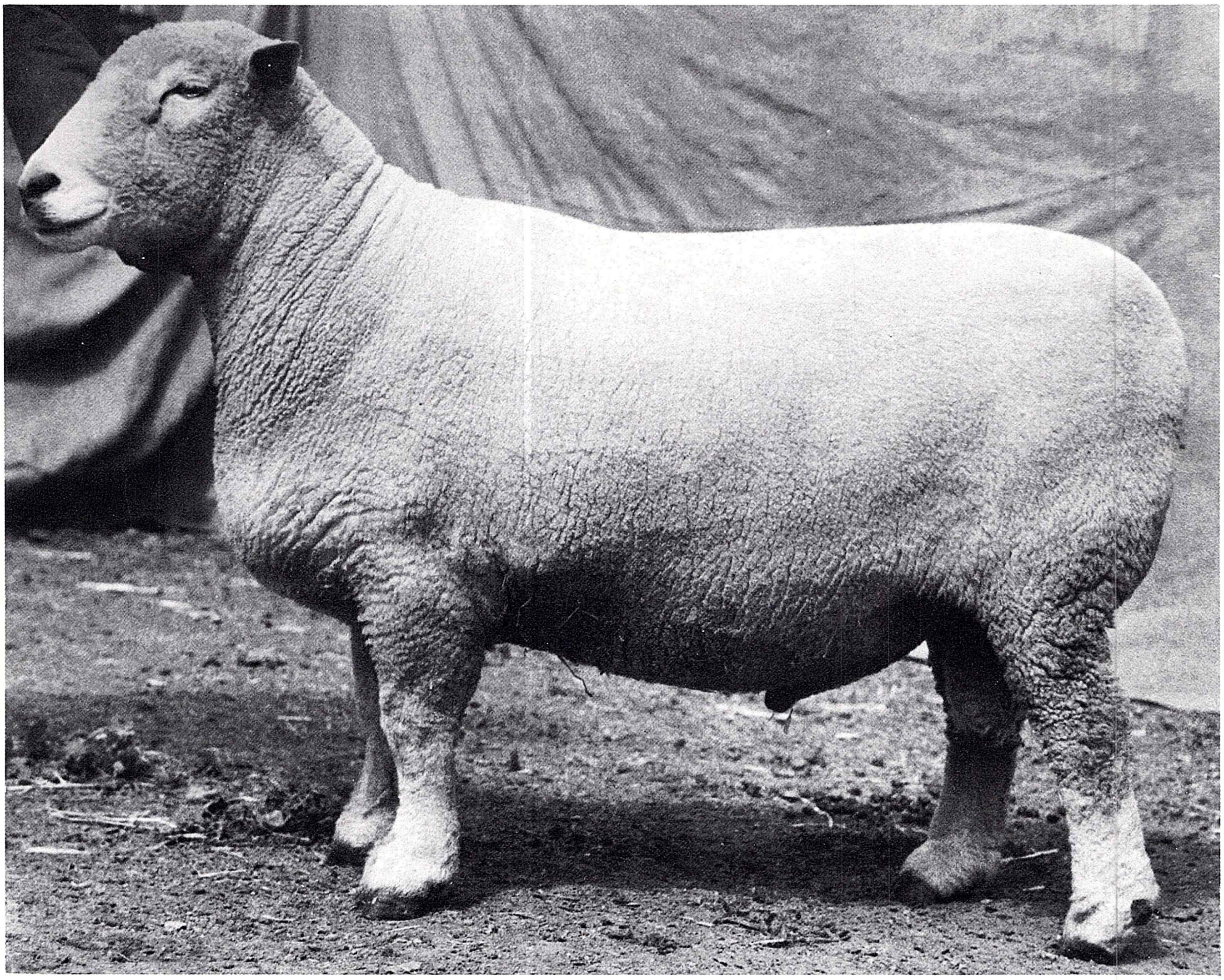
BODY WEIGHT
45–50 kg

WOOL PRODUCTION

Fibre diameter	23–26 microns
Staple length	75–110 mm
Fleece weight	4-5 kg

LAMB PRODUCTION
90–100 per cent. Long breeding season.





One of Britain's oldest sheep, the Ryeland has been used as a dual-purpose breed for over 600 years. It takes its name from the monks of Leominster, who bred the sheep in rye-growing areas of South Herefordshire. It has a hardy constitution and thrives in most sheep countries. The breed was first imported to New Zealand in 1903 and served as a prime lamb sire for crossbred and halfbred stock. At the peak of its popularity in the 1930s and 1940s there were several hundred flocks, but numbers have declined to 26 registered flocks today. The fleece has a soft handle, springiness and dense staple with practically no kemps or black and grey fibres. The clean white wool is suitable for textiles requiring a smooth finish and good resilience. It is used to produce high-quality tweeds and hosiery.

RYELAND

CLASSIFICATION
Meat breed used as a terminal crossing sire. Short Down wool.

FOUND
Scattered throughout the country.

DESCRIPTION
Moderate-sized, thickset sheep with a white face and legs which are usually covered with wool.

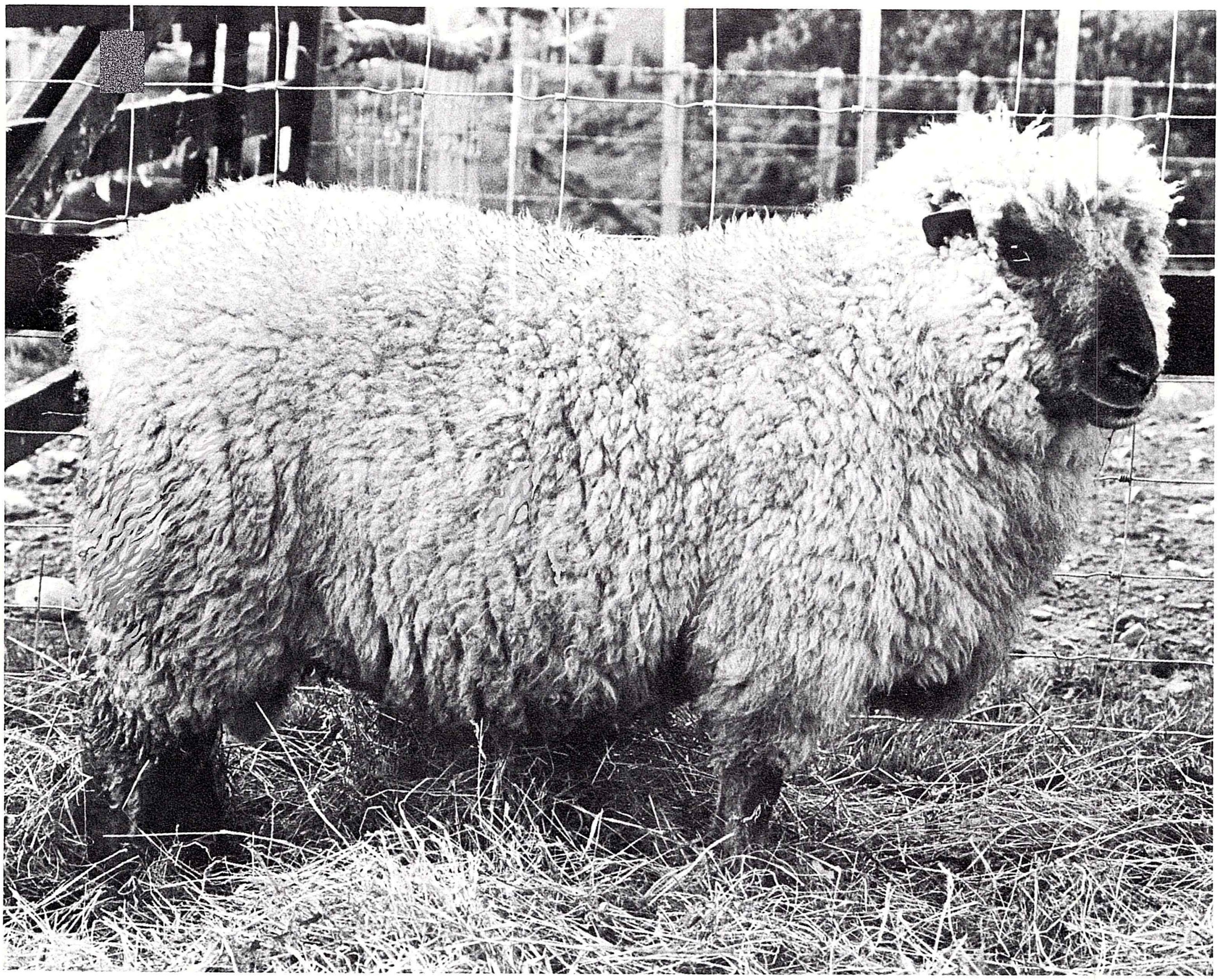
NUMBER
Under 10,000

BODY WEIGHT
55–60 kg

WOOL PRODUCTION

Fibre diameter	26–32 microns
Staple length	75–100 mm
Fleece weight	3–4 kg

LAMB PRODUCTION
100–120 per cent



The Shropshire arrived in New Zealand from England in 1864. Its numbers increased rapidly following the advent of refrigeration (in the 1880s) which encouraged farmers to look for sheep that suited both the wool and meat trades. The Shropshire became a popular crossing sire to produce lambs which conformed to the meat export requirements of the day. The breed had the added advantage of producing a heavier fleece than other Down types. In later years it was crossed with Cheviots for prime lamb production in the hard, high Ruahine Range of the North Island. Today there are few Shropshires in New Zealand. The wool contains few kemp and grey or black fibres and is used in woollen hosiery and knitting yarns.

SHROPSHIRE

CLASSIFICATION
Meat breed used as a terminal crossing sire. Short Down wool.

FOUND
Can be run throughout New Zealand.

DESCRIPTION
Medium-sized breed with brown face, ears and legs. Wool contains some pigmented fibres and kemp.

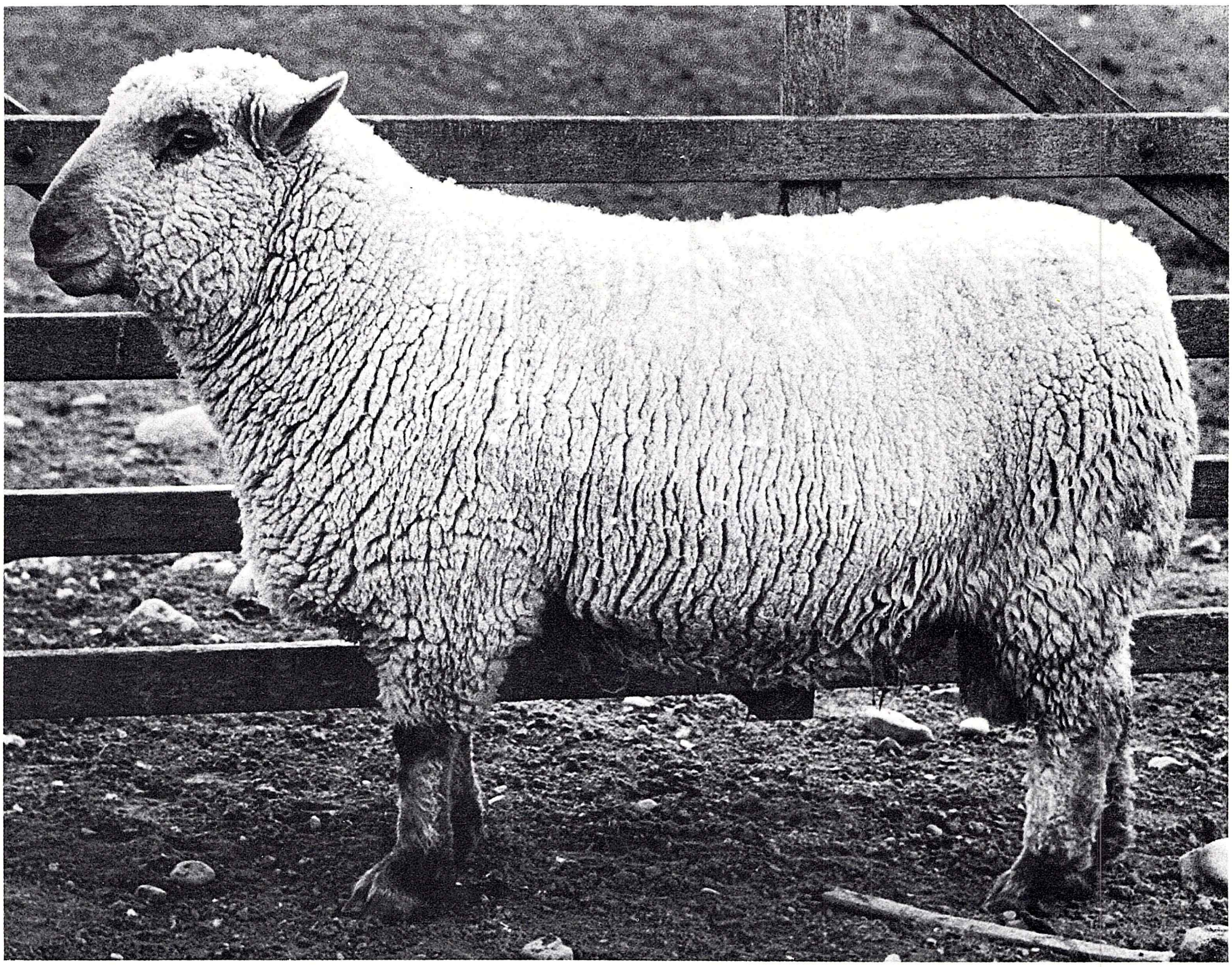
NUMBERS
Under 1000 (three known flocks).

BODY WEIGHT
55–60 kg

WOOL PRODUCTION

Fibre diameter	26–30 microns
Staple length	50–75 mm
Fleece weight	2–3 kg

LAMB PRODUCTION
100–120 per cent



SOUTH DORSET DOWN

The South Dorset Down became a popular fat-lamb sire in the 1950s shortly after the re-introduction of Dorset Downs. Southdown ewes were mated to Dorset Down rams and the resultant crossbred became so popular it was registered as a breed in 1956. South Dorset Down reaches maturity at a rate second only to the Southdown and its larger carcase is suited for the prime lamb export trade. There are 200 registered flocks grazing fertile lowland pastures. The fine Down-type wool is used for hosiery apparels and hand-knitting yarns. Wool from slaughtered crossbred prime lambs comprises a large part of New Zealand's "slipe" production. The skins are chemically treated at the meatworks enabling the wool to be "sloughed" or "sliped" off.

CLASSIFICATION
Meat breed used as a terminal crossing sire. Short Down wool.

FOUND
Widespread throughout New Zealand.

DESCRIPTION
Medium-sized sheep with brown face, ears and legs generally covered with wool.

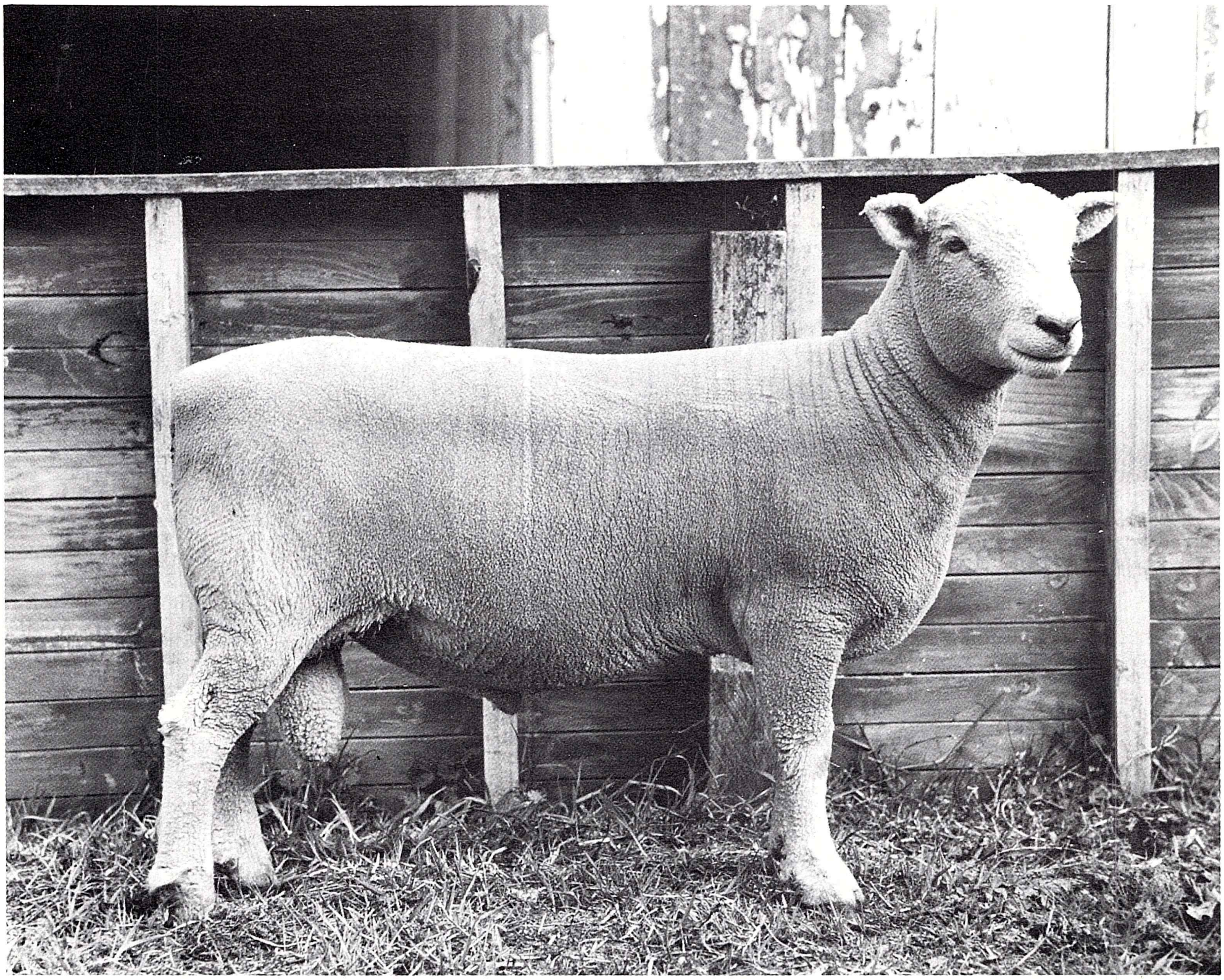
NUMBERS
58,000

BODY WEIGHT
50–55 kg

WOOL PRODUCTION

Fibre diameter	25–28 microns
Staple length	50–75 mm
Fleece weight	2–3 kg

LAMB PRODUCTION
100–120 per cent



SOUTHDOWN

The original Down breed from the rolling country in Sussex, England, the Southdown was among New Zealand's earliest stock arrivals in the 1840s. It was used in Britain and New Zealand in the evolution of Hampshire Down, Suffolk and Dorset Down and although smaller than these breeds, the Southdown is still earlier maturing and more compact. Once almost totally dominant as the New Zealand fat-lamb sire, changes in carcase requirements have caused it to lose ground to other breeds in recent years. The pedigree Southdown is not noted for fertility, but crossbreeding improves lamb survival rates and a Southdown-Romney lamb can reach carcase weights of 13 to 15 kg in 12 to 15 weeks. The individual fibres of the light, fine Southdown fleece have a distinct spiralled crimping. This creates a bulky effect and short staple length in comparison to fibre length. The Southdown wool is used in knitwear blends.

CLASSIFICATION
Meat breed used as a terminal crossing sire.
Short Down wool.

FOUND
The most widespread of any Down breed in New Zealand.

DESCRIPTION
Moderate-sized sheep. Mouse-coloured face—upper part and ears covered with short wool. Compact well-built body on short, woolled legs.

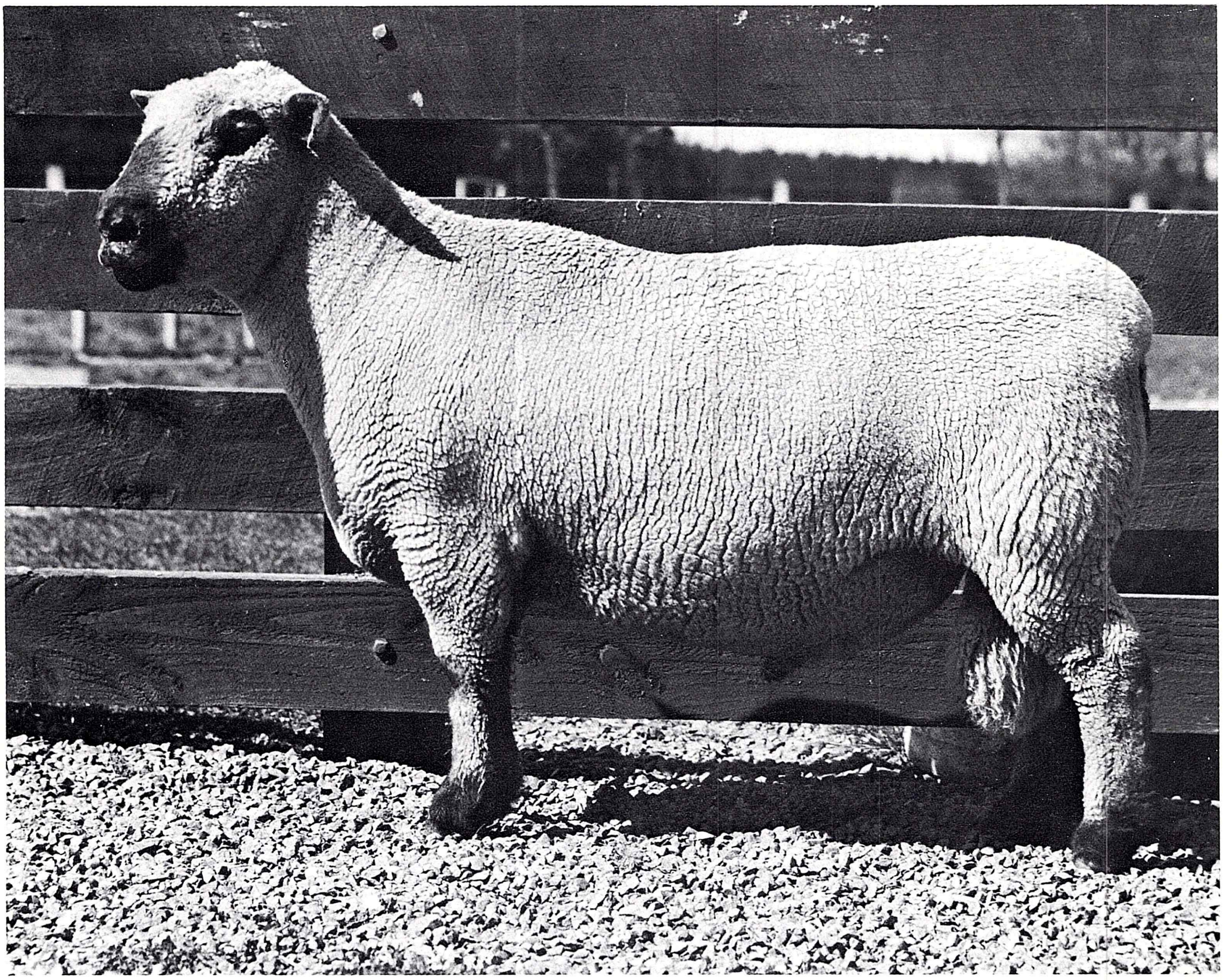
NUMBERS
165,000

BODY WEIGHT
50–55 kg

WOOL PRODUCTION

Fibre diameter	23–28 microns
Staple length	50–75 mm
Fleece weight	2–2.5 kg

LAMB PRODUCTION
100–120 per cent



Developed in New Zealand for the prime meat trade, the South Hampshire is an intermediate between its parent breeds. Experimental crossing of Southdown and Hampshire was initiated in the 1950s. Breeders wanted to develop a sheep with a firm handling carcase, more meat and less fat. Emphasis has been placed on early maturity, rapid weight gain and fertility. Today there are 32 registered flocks. The wool — typically Down-type and free of black fibres — is used in hand-knitting yarns, fine hosiery and flannels.

SOUTH HAMPSHIRE

CLASSIFICATION
Meat breed used as a terminal crossing sire. Short Down wool.

FOUND
Lowland areas.

DESCRIPTION
Medium-to-large sheep, dark brown face, ears and legs with wool on ears, legs and cheeks.

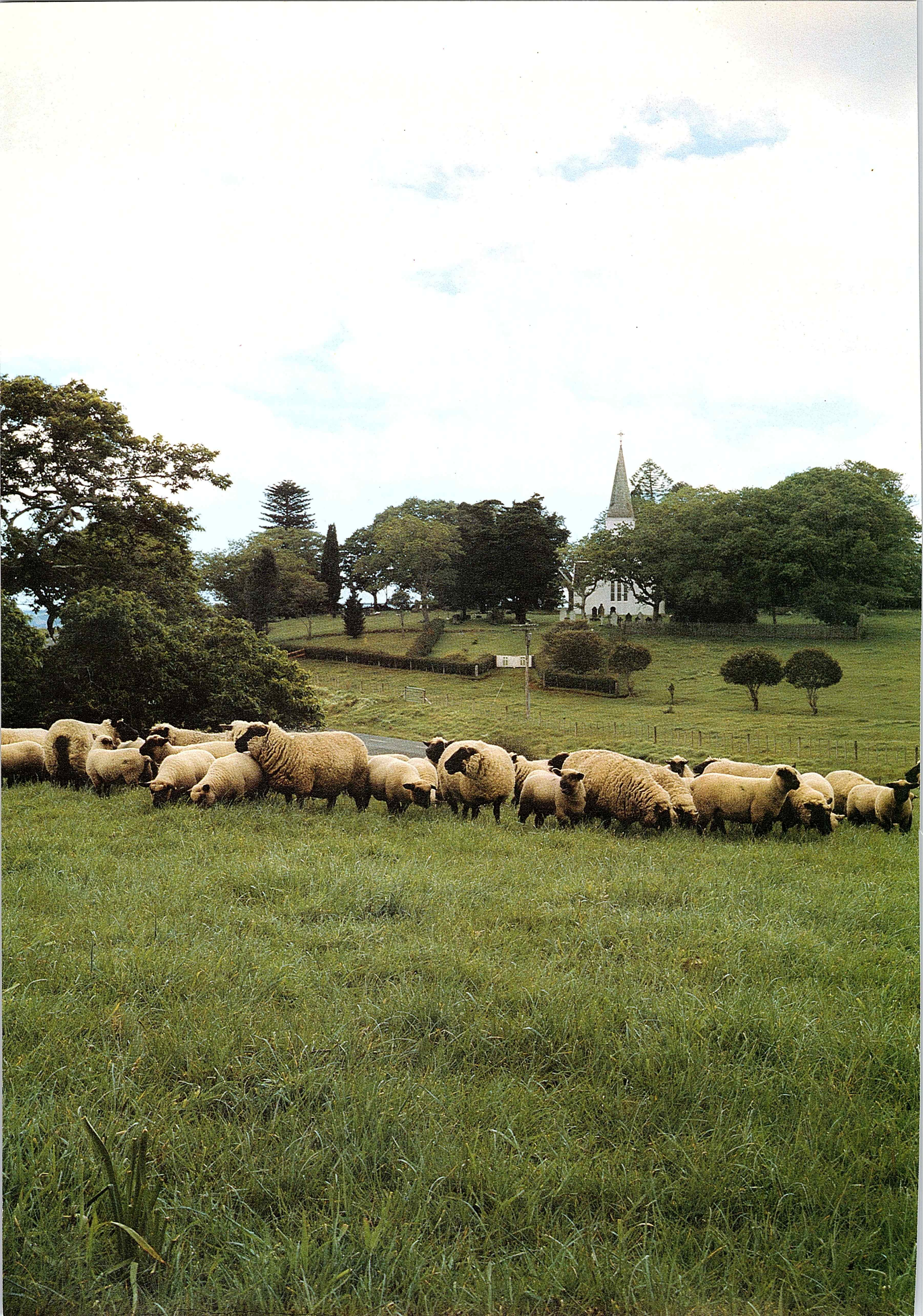
NUMBERS
Under 10,000

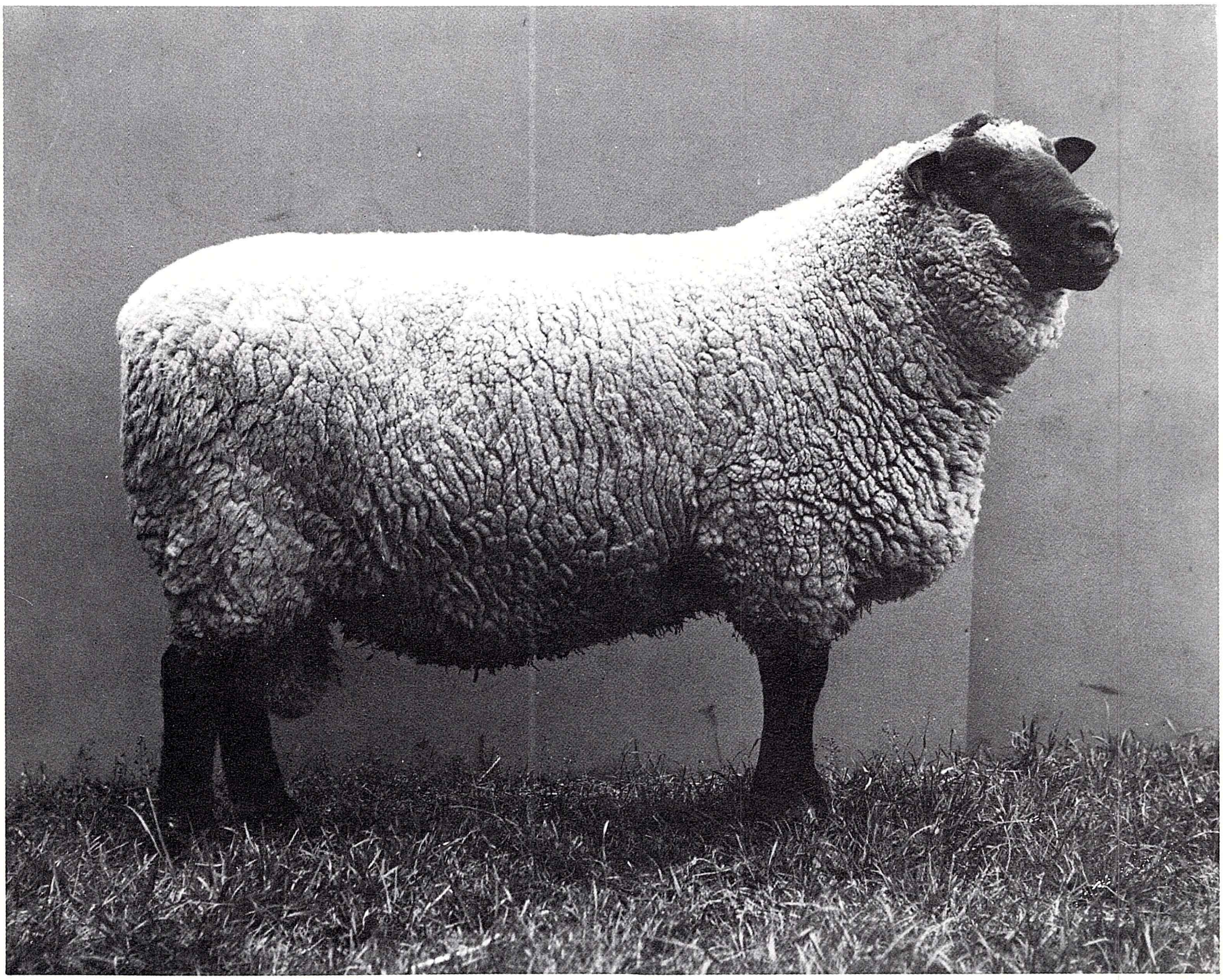
BODY WEIGHT
50–60 kg

WOOL PRODUCTION

Fibre diameter	25–28 microns
Staple length	50–75 mm
Fleece weight	2–3 kg

LAMB PRODUCTION
100–120 per cent





The South Suffolk first appeared in New Zealand during the 1930s in response to overseas demand for leaner meat. It is a New Zealand breed developed in Canterbury by a Southdown stud breeder, Mr George Gould, who was also responsible for introducing Suffolks to this country. Gould wanted a specialist breed to meet the requirements of a price schedule for prime lamb cuts which carried penalties for too much fat. The quick maturity and carcase shape of the Southdown and the high flesh-to-fat ratio of the Suffolk were incorporated. The South Suffolk became a registered breed in 1958 and is being increasingly used as a terminal sire for fat-lamb production. The typically Down wool is used for fine apparels and hand-knitting yarns.

SOUTH SUFFOLK

CLASSIFICATION
Meat breed used as a terminal crossing sire. Short Down wool with some pigmented fibres.

FOUND
Throughout New Zealand.

DESCRIPTION
Medium-sized sheep with dark brown face, ears and legs free from wool.

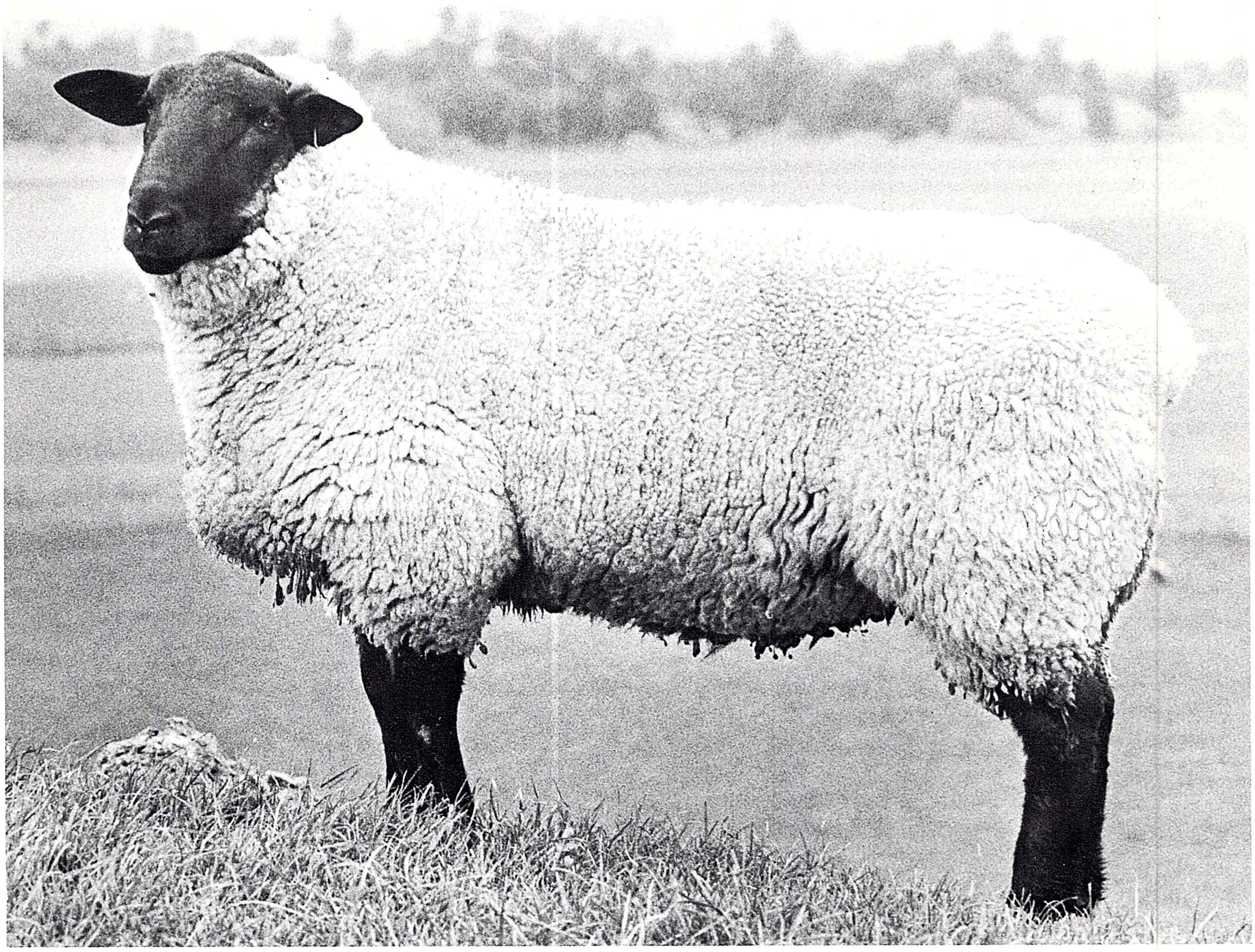
NUMBERS
94,000

BODY WEIGHT
50–60 kg

WOOL PRODUCTION

Fibre diameter	28–32 microns
Staple length	50–75 mm
Fleece weight	2–3 kg

LAMB PRODUCTION
100–120 per cent



The Suffolk first appeared in New Zealand in 1913 when George Gould imported a ram and six ewes from England. Further imports from Australia and the United Kingdom followed and by 1940 there were nine registered flocks. There are 215 flocks today. The Suffolk produces good-cutting, lean meat. This, coupled with its ability to quickly reach heavy weights, makes it ideally suited to the export trade in packaged lamb cuts. It has a robust constitution and is renowned for its hardiness. It was developed in England last century from black-faced Norfolk Horn ewes with Southdown rams and today is found extensively throughout Britain. In medieval times the Norfolk Horn wools were highly valued. Today the Suffolk still produce high-quality wool suitable for hand-knitting yarns, tweeds, flannel and dress fabrics.

SUFFOLK

CLASSIFICATION
Meat breed for terminal crossing sire. Short Down wool with some pigmented fibres.

FOUND
Widespread throughout New Zealand.

DESCRIPTION
Large body. Dark brown face and legs clear of wool.

NUMBERS
55,000

BODY WEIGHT
55–60 kg

WOOL PRODUCTION

Fibre diameter	30–35 microns
Staple length	75–100 cm
Fleece weight	2.5–3 kg

LAMB PRODUCTION
100–120 per cent

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SOUTHDOWN SHEEP SOCIETY OF NEW ZEALAND

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